Number 60; DECEMBER 1989

the first 10 years
I guess that most of what I want to say about reaching the end of a decade of publishing Connect is in the first article. However, a few thanks are also in order: to all those who have assisted in the production over ten years - walked around tables collating pages in the early days, addressed wrappers, sold or distributed copies at conferences, wrote about what was happening, sent money in on time or before time, said encouraging words and just... been there! Special thanks also to Bruce Wilson, who picked up editorial and publication responsibilities in 1988.

So I'd rather look forward into the 90s from Connect's perspective. We're already planning a major issue (or it might become two issues) early in the new year around the theme of primary schools and student participation. Some of this will draw together what we've tried and learnt in a series of training days for members of Junior Schools Councils, and this should be a practical 'how to do it' guide to running such training days.

Some should also be some more accounts to complement issue 35 (in 1985) on the theme: 'Student Participation - the Primary Issue'. We'd like your ideas and contributions to both of these directions - descriptions of classroom or Council practices.

There's also a need to renew an index of back issues, and we hope to pull this together sometime in the coming year.

Beyond that, what can we see? I think that issues of student participation in environmental education/action may emerge as a strong theme for the 90s. We have already seen some Junior School Councils vetoing proposed balloon releases at school celebrations as a reaction to their potential in lasting pollution.

Connect will be particularly interested to see how such initiatives in student participation are strengthened in the formal curriculum of schools and systems.

What can you see? What will you do? Christmas and New Year is traditionally a time for greetings and promises. What are your resolutions for supporting and strengthening student participation in the 1990s?

Best wishes to you all.

Roger Holdsworth
10 years!

CONNECT'S FIRST DECADE:

REFLECTIONS AND COMMENTS

Connect certainly didn’t invent the idea of student participation, but this issue marks ten years of its active support for that concept.

As several of the following accounts point out, the ideas of youth and student participation have been talked about and practised for many years. Curriculum projects have been developed, 'normal' or 'creative' classroom processes have seen students as partners in decisions about their learning, student organisations within schools have existed for a long time, and students and young people have a long history of sitting on decision-making bodies of all sorts.

When Connect started in December 1979, it was with the clear idea that information, resources and experiences in the area of 'youth participation in education', needed to be shared between practitioners. That first issue carried this statement:

This newsletter is produced in response to requests for information and the desire to share information. It is an affirmation of the belief in projects centred in the ability of students to participate in their education. But it is not meant to be a theoretical journal. Rather it is to be your newsletter, to carry information of what you're doing, to CONNECT up projects.

I became involved with compiling and publishing Connect because of my own teaching experiences. At that stage I had been and still was active in assisting students to publish a school-based multi-lingual student newspaper, in coordinating a cross-age tutoring program, in developing the alternative Year 12 (STC) Course, and in establishing a small 'community' school which stressed active participation of the whole student body in its governance. Through those experiences, I had collected (physically in many cases) resources that were being requested by others. What more useful than a newsletter to share these?

And it soon became apparent that others had resources and experiences that it was valuable to share ... essential to share, in fact, if we were to learn how best to construct educational approaches that genuinely acknowledged the value of students' participation.
Early issues of Connect involved more and more people - writing about classrooms and committees; subscribing to keep the newsletter in production. Though Connect had started with a teacher audience in mind, more active students also wrote about their involvement. Connect developed to what it is today: a newsletter written for all those active in and supportive of student participation in education decision making.

Again, in issue 1, we wrote:

In recent years, a number of projects have sprung up that involve young people actively and meaningfully in their own education, projects that emphasise participation over passivity. These projects vary in style, format and emphasis. What is such a youth participation (project) is often difficult to define, especially from outside.

There are, for example, a number of newspapers, newsletters and magazines that are largely controlled by the young people putting them out. They differ from the traditional school magazine in those issues of participation and control - they make an active attempt at every point to involve the students in the operation of the project.

There are cross-age tutoring programs that, by their very existence, assert that young people can play a central role in their own education and in the education of their peers.

There are whole schools that involve students in government - not just the traditional advisory SRC, but particip-

ipation in decision making by the whole school body. These tend to be smaller schools or the schools that have broken into smaller units.

There are drama programs, poetry readings, book publishing efforts - all of which have young people active in their education. All are united in the belief that people learn by doing and that young people can do things - they have capabili-

ties.

Over ten years, the major change has been that the list of activities has broadened. Work education, research, electronic media and formal decision-making structures could all be added to that list. In addition, it was realised that student participation wasn't necessarily 'project' based - that it wasn't a 'thing' but rather an approach to collaborative education.

In 1980 and again in 1981, Connect was central to the organisation of two 'National Workshops' of youth participation in education and a third specifically round radio in schools. These drew together large numbers of students, teachers and others and were significant, I believe, in increasing an awareness both of the range of activities and of ensuring that those involved realised they weren't alone.

There have been other important 'markers' during the decade. The focus provided by the Participation and Equity Program is particularly notable. In Victoria, for example, the decision to advance funds directly to Student Representative Councils had an effect that far exceeded the size of the grants - student groups had to grapple with the implications of being accountable for funds for 'developing student participation' in those schools. More directly (to Connect), PEP's publication of collections of articles on 'Tutoring', 'Students Publishing', 'Students and Radio' and 'Students and Work' provided tools that are still in demand from us. A fifth volume on 'Students and School Governance' was planned and laid-out but was a casualty of the ending of PEP.

Discussions on student participation also formalised in Victoria in the Ministerial Working Party on Student Participation (the Report of which is rumoured to be still in production), throughout Australia in decisions (largely emanating from International Youth Year in 1985) of support for student organisations, and at a Federal level in publication of the Schools Commission discussion paper "Student Participation and the Participation and Equity Program".
While Connect has been prominent in many of these areas, it has operated under substantial constraints - all of which, I guess, make its contribution more remarkable.

First, Connect has always operated on a hand-to-mouth basis, borrowing funds to keep appearing every second month for a decade. For the record (yet again), Connect is not the publication of any organisation, nor has it received any grant or other funding for its operation. It is almost a personal idiosyncrasy, reliant entirely on subscriptions and donations. Those have, throughout the decade, been just enough to cover production and mailing costs, and certainly have left noting for promotion or initiatives. We end the decade over $1000 in debt - and will, doubtless, continue as we have in the past!

Secondly, Connect's content is atypically Victorian-centred, despite efforts to achieve a national balance. This is almost a natural consequence of being located in Melbourne and is reinforced by a lack of any budget for travel in order to encourage and collect other information.

Thirdly, the development of Connect is constrained by the need to earn an income. For much of the decade Connect was produced 'after hours' - while maintaining 'real' jobs as a teacher, consultant or youth affairs policy worker. I'm now working part-time in order to devote a couple of days a week to production of Connect, but this is constantly eroded with student training days, in-services, working parties, committees and the like. Connect is in absolutely no position to even pay a subsistence salary.

So, what does the future hold for student participation and for Connect?

I remain defiantly optimistic! After a considerable slump in support with the conclusion of PEP, and a period where we were told that 'participation' was a 70s concept (!), there again seems to be renewed interest. The flurry of activity in support of Junior School Councils in Victorian Primary Schools has been a most interesting addition to the scenario.

I also remain defiantly convinced that we must develop curriculum directions along the paths pioneered by the schools and classrooms documented in Connect in the past ten years. If education is to make sense ... if the world is to make sense ... and if we are all to learn to exercise control over our lives, then a curriculum that acknowledges the value of students, that affirms that all students can contribute - now - to our society, and that challenges students to learn through a process of shaping their world - then, a participatory curriculum is essential.

With your continued support, Connect will be there for at least another ten years to document, support and argue for that curriculum!

Roger Holdsworth
Editor and Publisher
Congratulations to Connect and especially to Roger Holdsworth, whose vision and energy has kept this journal alive these past ten years.

Connect started life with an idea that centred around the discourse of possibility – the possibility that schools and local communities could be places where students learnt to construct knowledge through cooperative and participatory forms of learning.

Youth participation programs provided a core of experience and knowledge through actively involving students in program practice. Students involved themselves in school and community projects as tutors, aides, researchers, planners and consultants. Students were encouraged to make responsible decisions in and about the school and community. The emphasis in the general run of programs placed a strong value on forms of social cooperation, a fair go, all within a concept of democratic values.

Some people argued that it was a form of moral education because of the emphasis placed on students caring for other people and the opportunity to exercise responsibility.

Those of us setting up programs in the early 1970s were strongly influenced by the work of Kurt Lewin, a social psychologist who formed the theory that the best way to change people was to make them participants in the change process.

We now know from more recent research that student achievements on cooperative learning tasks were significantly better than those measured under competitive or individualistic conditions (ie Argyris et al [1985]; Johnston et al [1981]; Joyce et al [1986]; Bloom [1984]; Goodlad and Hirst [1989]; Glasser [1986]). Inside the classroom, these programs enabled teachers and students to work together on the resolution of problems, thus changing the teaching/learning dynamic of the class.

Often a school subject could be entered through a social issue (ie connection between energy crisis and science lesson; human relationship lesson and cross-age tutoring; costs of pollution and maths lesson). Much good work has been achieved, and programs have demonstrated how academic and social competence could be developed – particularly with those students struggling with conventional school process. Students were provided with reasons to learn, and from this encouragement and sense of competence, motivation to learn enhanced.

The Newsletter of Youth Participation in Education Projects 123 Brook Street, Northcote 3070 Victoria Australia

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FITZROY HIGH – IN TRANSITION

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There was never really anything very new about this learning process. After all, it was Aristotle who clarified for us the concept of 'practical wisdom'. He made no separation between learning and doing, as we have in contemporary schooling. So, without stretching this relationship too far, the participatory learning mode was adopted from an earlier tradition as ways of valuing student opinion and activity.

However the critics were correct in raising questions of participation for what? One of the traps - as with any teaching program - is that it can be seen as an end-in-itself. Participation in itself is a limited view of learning. For 'Youth Participation' programs to have substance, they had to move students beyond mere participation in problem solving situations. Participation is an empty ritual unless it is accompanied by competence. And competence is empty unless the action is useful to society and individuals. I sounded a note of caution on this theme in 1985 ('Schools and Delinquency') and there is even stronger reason to state this again in 1990.

I made the point that youth programs can be used to pacify students, and not educate them - the lessons of history have to be learnt. Connect never defined youth participation as co-optation. If there has been one lesson we should have learnt from this last decade of experience, it is that any school program ought to be built into the broader aims of the school curriculum, they should have a clear educational purpose and connection.

Youth participation programs are not an end in themselves, but a means for students to gain access to formative and personal understanding. To give substance to my concern related to the use of participatory learning methods, one needs to look at the New British Education Reform Act (1988). The Education Reform Act of 1988 has changed the organisation of state schooling in the UK from a government service planned and organised in partnership with elected local authorities, to a market related system. Schools will be required to 'sell' the same educational goods in the form of a standard national curriculum, which in turn will be subject to a standard testing program. (None of this will apply to independent or private schools.)

In the briefest of terms, the Reform Act will argue for a three tier system of education:

**First tier:**

- Independent schools for children of the wealthy - with a group recruited from the ranks subsidised by local council, state and private funds (called the Assisted Places Scheme - a most damaging piece of legislation because it allows for differential school selection according to IQ, race and class);

**Second tier:**

- City Technology Colleges and Grant Maintained Schools;

**Third tier:**

- State schools that will provide a minimum education for the rest of the school population.

Teaching objectives have been tied to centrally established criteria of a market economy. It is a kind of a free-market curriculum, ensuring a common political loyalty. It links a neo-conservative emphasis on tradition, authority and national identity with a layer of neoliberal free market economics. The cellular structure of its decision-making process means that it stands in radical opposition to the notion of collective action as a means to achieve social justice.

In order to implement the New Reform Act, a 'new' kind of teaching is required.
The Act states its preference for 'experience based learning', and this requires that the new teaching be 'student centred', 'activity based' and 'relevant to needs of industry'. Reading, writing and numerical skills are seen only as minimum achievements. 'Attitude' development is strongly encouraged.

These same themes were subject to severe attack by this same government not so long back and, in fact, were given as the reason for a decline in school standards and school discipline. Why this reversal? They obviously needed good ideas on how to teach the new 'enterprise' philosophy and how to motivate students in the classroom - experience-based learning encouraged skills and student motivation not found in academic schooling. However, what needs to be added to these sparse comments is that the authors of the New Act have been very selective in what aspect of the learning model they have chosen to work with. There is a powerful contradiction between the general aims of the Act and the anti-democratic nature of the program.

There are severe limitations on individual and collective forms of knowledge and experience. In the opinion of this writer, it is a policy that will lessen the individual's active involvement in the political life of their society.

The participatory learning programs have been deliberately stripped, as one critic argues, of their more 'eccentric social habits'. Schools are talked of as 'Enterprise Zones', merging market principles with centralised control over knowledge and culture.

I write this at the conclusion of six months in London, part of which was spent doing an evaluation of the impact of the New Education Reform Act on schools. There is a lesson to be learnt from all this for Australian schools. Already, school language is changing and one can hear: 'measurable targets', 'marketing issues', 'choice', 'mission', 'market related publicity', 'full flexible control' as means to describe school curriculum and policy issues. The 'Enterprise' philosophy is being adopted from the UK and applied to local schools. Sound teaching models can be stripped of formative educational values and used for other more utilitarian purposes - and often less democratic ones.

The lesson in part is that nothing we do in schools can ignore wider political movements - and the struggle is always to continue toward the making of a more democratic school. Democracy in this definition is the freedom to grow, but not at the expense of others. These and other democratic values have been, for me, the foundation values in Youth Participation programs. They are as important now as they were in 1979 - maybe more so. They act as a counter to the more authoritarian models presently in currency.

The cooperative learning model adds to the other teaching models within a school curriculum. It is an effort to expand the range of student competencies that can be recognised and accepted within a school. Far from being a program that has had its time, it remains a very strong addition to a balanced and democratically oriented curriculum. These kinds of programs allow students to test the power of their (and our) ideas in actual practice. A school with these programs thrives on students debating the concept of what makes a better world. It becomes a hopeful school. It encourages ideas and practical solutions.

I am looking forward to Connect expanding this valuable teaching and learning model during the next ten years!

Tony Knight
Centre for Curriculum and Teacher Education
La Trobe University, Bundoora
Congrats! First of all to Connect for ten years’ survival in the bleak world of small publications. I was lucky enough to feature in some of the early editions through books we produced in 1979 (The Golden Shaft) and 1984 (The Wind in the Wimmera).

These books were the work of hundreds of students and comprised stories, poems, recipes, social issues and snippets of oral history. I still feel youthful and joyous at the thought of working with the young people on these projects, and I hope that each contributor, some a decade older, will also look back with enjoyment.

Enjoyment. Yes. Enjoyment flowing from a task that had meaning and importance for their lives. It is worth recalling some of the comments made by students at Ballarat East High School in 1979:

"The stories, recipes, poems and all the other contributions to the book were really good. I got a lot of laughs out of the book, and I am proud of BEHS because they are the only school in Victoria which has made a book like ours."

"It is hard to realise that when I look at my story I can honestly say - that's my story - I wrote it."

"Putting something in a book was really a dream come true for a lot of kids at BEHS. For me, it was to have something of mine in a real book. To have all our hard work turned into something that will live in the eyes of many."

So what now is the scene as we near 1990? Many of the ideas that Connect stands for, such as cooperative learning and student responsibility are firmly part of the program of many schools. I think of cross-age tutoring and participation in school governance.

Many formative ideas behind the VCE are reflected in the praxis of Connect - for example, the Communications and Investigative projects in English. The ground opened up by Connect has stood the test of time.

There will always be a need for Connect. Schools have to know what others are doing. The need of young people to be engaged in socially beneficial projects that have meaning for them will always be there, whatever the age, whatever the culture.

The economic and ideological climate of 1989 is harsher than a decade ago. All the more reason to fight for the ideals that Connect stands for!

John Martin
Warracknabeal High School
I look back at youth and student participation - memories and experiences - that go back a little further than the last ten years. This was the formative period for me when, as a young person, I was trying to assert what I believed youth participation to be about.

I believed then, and I believe now, that youth participation is about young people taking control over aspects of their lives; being equipped with the knowledge, skills and opportunities to do so; being open to and excited about opportunities to create futures; and being engaged with others in establishing the vision of community over self-interest. I believed then, and I believe now, that youth participation is achievable and necessary.

As a young person in 1969 however, I was part of a society that largely did not want to know about young people's involvement. But I had help - firstly in the shape of some youth leadership training (voluntary), which led to greater social and political awareness and later, voluntary involvement in the Youth Council of Victoria (later to be YACVic), I met leaders of youth organisations, fine people for whom I still have the greatest respect, who believed passionately in the need to embrace complexity in the search for answers to social issues. (Some of these people sought to mould youth participation into the structure of their organisations. Their vision, not without resistance, was to become the forming ground for the Youth Affairs Council of Australia - an umbrella body for non-government youth affairs, which could operate cooperatively, or with separate perspectives of youth organisations, workers with youth, geographic diversity [ie State and Territory Youth Affairs Councils/Networks] and young people.)

I met peers with whom I shared the quest for youth participation. We had assistance from programs such as the 'Youth 2000' series of projects. The 'Youth 2000' series was designed specifically to enable the participation of young people in social/political activity. It commenced in 1974 at the instigation of the Victorian Minister for Youth, Sport and Recreation, Brian Dixon. Known at the time as "the Minister-For-Most-Getting-His-Photo-in-the-Newspaper", he was nevertheless one of the most visionary politicians I have met in terms of his understanding of youth participation and his actions to try and see it become accepted as a part of public life. Brian Dixon coped more than a share of cynicism from critics who chose to see this as a cute political stunt. As one of the participants throughout the series (until 1978), I became weary defending myself against the view that I was an intellectually stunted, fearfully manipulated, play-acting token of young personhood.

I was learning that youth participation was costly, exhausting, challenging, but never boring. Sometimes my contributions in public arenas were accepted; sometimes I went back to the drawing board. Sometimes, with my peers, we regrouped and dug in to fight for what we believed. I believe I did some good work throughout this time, of which I am proud.

The lesson I did not learn from this time - until very late in my career - was how neatly and easily a group which has a dogma or style which opposes a particular (perceived) dogma or style can wrap, label and consign to damnation all opposing parties. Should I be surprised at that? Ah, but I am so naive as to believe that throughout the 'Youth 2000' series and what followed, I did not accept all at face value, but sifted, sorted, changed my views and grew as a person! And so, I believe, did the hundreds and hundreds of young people spread to the geographic winds around Victoria, who gained through the 'Youth 2000' series some insight into social and political participatory process - and who, perhaps, as a result, are more resilient, adaptable, creative and caring people. I like to think so.
In the 'heady days' of youth participation - the years leading up to International Youth Year in 1985, the promotion of youth participation as a valued phenomenon gained momentum. By this time, I was working professionally in the youth affairs field - and there was a belief that we had made real gains in encouraging all spheres of public life - schools, unions, media outlets, churches, youth organisations, the polity, families - to acknowledge the critical importance of youth participation and practise it. Practise it! What I mean by this is: get to work on ensuring that youth participation was a meaningful and actual part of that institution.

Well, how have we fared, four years after IYY? In a journal that concerns youth and student participation, some readers may scoff at the notion that there are still schools which spend neither time nor inclination in involving their students in decisions about their education process. Equally, it may be impossible to consider youth organisations which allow their young members little or no say in the directions of their organisations. Sadly, they do exist, outweighing the 'good news' stories which have appeared in Connect these past ten years, encouraging us to new, creative heights.

Sadly, we have examples such as a union movement (the ACTU) recently scratching its collective heads for clues as to why union membership is plummeting alarmingly - and young people are, reportedly, the hardest to attract. Churches mirror the trend. Why, it must be asked, should young people feel allegiance to organisations which have traditionally shut them off from meaningful participation until they are 'sage and experienced'?

We still, in spite of the lessons of IYY, read and view alarmist, sensational media pieces which stereotype young people as loutish, idle, ignorant and destructive 'youths'. This apart from being largely incorrect, breeds ill-will.

The political process ensures that, well, some things are done for young people. (Heaven forbid any 'with' or 'by' ...) Sometimes a lucky group gets to play Mayor and Councillors for a day, or is invited to a 'meet your Polite' exercise. Rarely are opportunities created to allow ongoing participation by young people in the broad (ie non-Party) political process. It should be said that experience shows that when such opportunities are created, some politicians have been so aghast at the articulateness of the young people involved that they have immediately claimed that these cannot be 'real young people'. So effective, it seems, is the media stereotyping mentioned above, that one must assume all young people are required to speak with a vocabulary which comprises: "Like ... er, y'know ... I dunno!" Fail to do this, and, be warned, you will be regarded as freakish! And heaven forbid that, maybe through your involvement, you could become committed to a process of social change. Why, then you will be regarded as manipulated! Further, while in some cases you will undoubtedly experience manipulation, it will be expected that because of your youth, you will not have the knowledge or skill to see this for what it is, extricate yourself or move beyond it.)
Its relevance today? Well, I started out writing this piece with my early experiences of youth participation in mind. Now, mid-way through my fourth decade, I can attest to times in my life when I have doubted that control over one's life was indeed possible. There have been occasions when that control was wrenched away from me, when despair mounted as one's certainty about one's skills and abilities for coping ebbed away. But cope I did, and survive negative experiences I did, and change my life's directions I did, on several occasions. It would be foolish to claim this strength is a result of a few positive experiences in youth participation - the make up of any person is drawn from a rich fabric of environments and experiences. But I know that what I believe to be the ethos of youth participation (outlined right up front in this article) has been decisive in shaping my life and, hopefully, in touching the lives of others.

Is youth participation still relevant? Oh yes! It will never be easy - and because it involves the giving and taking of power, it will always be controversial.

But Connect has lived in spite of and because of these factors. May the next decade be equally, if not more, rewarding!

Jackie Ohlin
Gorokan 2263

10 years!

ARE STUDENTS UP FRONT YET?

About ten years ago, I came into the education scene from the youth work field and immediately came across the terms 'student participation' and 'student action'. I was given the impression that all of this youth involvement stuff was new.

It seemed to be newish to the education scene, and those of us from 'outside' were a little bemused as to why all the fuss, because this sort of thing had been happening elsewhere for a long time.

All of a sudden, the 'educationalists' were promoting the fact that young people were able to contribute to the life of the schools and to the curriculum. Young people were, in fact, encouraged to join committees and initiate activities and have a say in the running of the school. Wow! Young and old alike were freaking out as to what this might lead to and what the long-term effects might be. All except those who had been practising the concept for many years - and there were many people very active in the scene but who hadn't thought it anything particularly special.

It seemed to be new to the Ministry because 'some-one' had decided that Student Participation was an acceptable philosophy and that all schools should be into it.

Yes, schools across the state were encouraged to have students on the School Council, on the Curriculum Committee,
on the Yard Control Committee and every other committee that existed. Schools were even given some resources to let it happen ... consultants and even some money. Student Participation was off and running.

My task in the early 80s, as a Student Action Project Officer, was to work with all post-primary schools in the Central Highlands-Wimmera Region and encourage students to get in there and have a go - develop activities, workshops, conferences, become involved on committees and establish networks.

Students from all year levels responded and groups of active young people began to generate activities, become involved at various levels of the school and, in turn, take the Ministerial policies seriously.

The young people were fired up and ready to lead the way.

Young people in all ways were indicating that they were happy to accept the responsibilities, even though they were naive and ignorant of the processes and procedures already established by those before them. This then led to many young people becoming disillusioned and 'cheesed-off', because what they had planned didn't happen as envisaged. The support wasn't there; the resources weren't there; the advice and information wasn't there. And whose fault was it? I would suggest the adults who held the control stick.

There were a few 'adults' within the system who looked on the whole affair with half-closed eyes and ears and hoped that it would all go away, 'cause they reckoned they already had students involved in things within their school. Yeah! They had kids in projects, directed by teachers, controlled by adults ... and the kids were doing as they were told! So all was terrific.

As far as many adults were concerned, all they had to do was nod their heads at the philosophy and all would be hunky dorey. BUT ...

The introduction of the concept in a more formalised sense meant that adults associated with the school operation needed to think about the 'role' young people had to play within the school.

However, I think the LEVEL of student participation was the real question.

It was a question that many people did not wish to address and many still don't, because it means that young people have a real say to their destiny.

Just how far do we allow young people to control the operation when they are relatively 'itinerrant'? Yet the Ministry in Victoria has sanctioned student participation very strongly through Frameworks and all aspects of the VCE.
We are happy at the school level to have young people negotiate some learning aspects, projects and assignments, but when it comes to overall administration of the school, then our attitude changes. Young people on committees, administrative discussions and other planning structures are still very much the token participant. We continue not to inform them and guide them in their participation. We haven't gained too much in this area over the past ten years!

There have been some gains, but I would suggest there haven't been as many as there could have been. However, we are on the right track and I would hope that the next ten years sees more than some superficial participation. I believe that we must continue to work at the following levels:

The individual teacher:

If we were doing then, then we are still doing. At least now with a bit more support from others around us. We were a bit alone then, whereas now we at least can gather a few along with us in the concept of Student Action/Participation. We were seen by the kids as doing the right and proper, and therefore had their support. Our attitude has not radically changed and it is nice to say 'I told you so' every once in a while.

Students:

In lots of respects the kids remain the same ... some who were/are prepared to get up and give it a go, whilst some others just follow on, prepared to do as they are told. Those who want to give it a go are now supported more positively and encouraged by more around them ... the majority are still happy for the teacher/adult to arrange/organise.

Local School Level:

At the school level, the Council and the other committees enable students to be involved, but I would suggest that the level of participation in most situations is still very limited, students are ill-prepared, not really listened to and, in the main, still the token representative.

The Ministry Level:

Those from 'above us' have been able to implement some of the philosophy that we have been flogging and this is evident in the structure of the VCE, Frameworks, negotiated learning, descriptive assessment, cross-age tutoring, research projects etc. However, the philosophy cannot develop further without constant support, both in terms of finance and people. The Ministry must continue to give it a go and encourage real student participation and action.

Student Action and Participation is a bit like the old ice-berg. We have done some work on the bit that's out of the water, but have a lot to do in the future with that which remains to be discovered and in turn developed.

Young people still need the support, encouragement and advice to enable them to achieve their dreams.

They continue to need a variety of skills, resources and, above all, the opportunity.

Those of us who are old in the body, but still young at heart can help them realise those dreams.

Graeme Kent
SCO, Mt Clear Network
Ballarat 3350
"Being Needed by People!"
"Feeling Good About Myself!"
"Knowing That I Have Something to Contribute!"
"Believing That What I Say is Valued by Others!"

These feelings of self-realisation have formed a visible part of the programs in which I have been involved in three different schools in northern suburban Melbourne over the past ten years. Delightful attitudes have evolved in a cooperative environment in which students are required to develop a sense of responsibility to themselves and towards others.

By involving students in a lively program operating within the context of the community surrounding them, many positive outcomes have been observed. I have noted tremendous confidence developing in students who have come from many different family backgrounds. These students have worked in mixedability, flexible settings. They have been able to grasp responsibility and to make decisions in real-life situations.

Some of the programs have operated with consistently pleasing outcomes over the past ten years. One of these is the cross-age tutoring concept. I have been involved with students being tutors and tutees on both an intra-school and inter-school basis. The joys, frustrations and hard work have fostered a closeness between teachers and students which is very rewarding. The positive interactions between the different age levels break down many artificial barriers.

Certain projects and programs do remain as significant memories:

At Thomastown Primary School there was a great community spirit developed when one of our local Greek parents agreed to organise an awareness program for children of all nationalities. A Greek singing and dancing group developed which visited a wide range of community venues including Special Schools, shopping centres, elderly citizens' functions and secondary schools. The 'valuing of difference' was the powerful, major thrust.

At Apollo Parkways Primary School, all children in grade 5-6 were involved in a Community Awareness Program which brought in many visitors from the community and also took students into a variety of settings. They widened their horizons as they actively made decisions and investigated the world around them - eg looking at people's jobs, studying the way business operated, and discussing with people the nature of the help they have given members of the community as nurses, welfare workers, council employees and doctors.

At Preston Primary School, one of the major areas of concern has been the development of self-esteem programs. A variety of strategies have been used to develop students' abilities to feel a sense of self-worth and to mix confidently with other children and adults. Many children have interacted very successfully outside the school, explaining happenings and ideas that have been developed. Within the school setting, children have taken numerous visitors on tours of the school buildings in which they have explained the ideals and programs of our school. They have been able to teach adults in special in-service programs related to a range of curriculum issues. Pride in knowledge and ownership have been constantly apparent.

**HOW DO ALL THESE ACTIVITIES FIT INTO CURRENT EDUCATIONAL PHILOSOPHIES?**

Hurrah! It is most reassuring when the great Ministry epistles fit in with one's own educational beliefs!!

All current writings seem to re-affirm the value of our stance in promoting:
It's pretty amazing to think that a magazine with the limited resources of Connect should have successfully completed ten years of publication. On the other hand, it's not so surprising when you look at the subject matter: young people participating in various kinds of educational projects over which they exercise some control.

It's fair to say that one of the significant developments in education over the last ten years has been the growing interest in and commitment to student involvement in education decision making. Connect has played a major part in exploring, promoting and developing what has been a fundamental step towards a more democratic education system and, one hopes, society.

Many of the articles over the years have focused particularly on the issues of school governance. How do we get young people involved in the formal decision making about how their school should operate? What kind of structures, support or strategies are necessary to ensure that the involvement is more than token? How can young people, teachers and parents ensure that participatory decision making is genuinely representative? It is a testament to the creativity and inventiveness of the members of our school communities that a wide variety of structures have been tried at all levels of schooling: primary, secondary, TAFE and tertiary.

Many other contributions have focused on issues more specifically related to curriculum and student learning. In the early years of the 1980s, I think that it's fair to say that most interest was shown in aspects of learning that were at the margins of 'real' work: performance related activities, publications, work experience programs, radio and community studies. Many of these were promoted more widely by PEP subsequently. For me in particular, I appreciated Connect's role in promoting the possibilities of student participation in local employment projects.

In more recent years, participation by students in the 'mainstream' of classroom decision making and in the assessment of student work has attracted a lot more interest and practice in schools. In Victoria, the Year 12 STC Course has been founded on a commitment to negotiation and cooperative learning between teachers and students, and students with each other. The new VCE study designs continue to place some priority on student participation in the implementation of the new course, and certainly provide much greater flexibility than the present VCE Group 1 subjects.

For me, this remains the challenge of the next decade. We still have much to learn about how student participation in classroom decision making can occur, and there are still many, many young people in Australian schools who have little involvement in shaping the character of their formal learning.

I am sure that Connect will continue to provide a valuable forum for advancing these ideas. I would like to close by acknowledging in writing the very great debt which I and many others owe to Roger for his efforts in maintaining the magazine and other initiatives over the past decade. I am sure that he looks forward to others rallying to support its growth over the next ten years.

Bruce Wilson
Youth Research Centre
Institute of Education
University of Melbourne
Dragons was a terrific play about a girl searching for her loved one with a small band of friends. Set in the era of kings and queens, the girl had many dangers facing her, as well as the powers of the evil Vertigo to fight against. Her journey was very hazardous, but the dragons kept her safe till the end.

Many hours of hard work were put in by all actors in the play to make the characters seem so genuine on stage.

Behind the glamour of costumes and music, however, were the people who got the drama production up on stage - the directors ... not just one, but four: two for the actors, one for the band and lead singers and one for the stage scenes. These directors were all enthusiastic teachers who gave up many of their spare hours to instruct the students. That does not end the list, though, for there were also teachers to design and make the costumes, to design the set, to organise the lighting, to train the group singers, to do the make-up, to organise the choreography and to do the video-taping. Dragons involved more than half the teachers and well over half the students.

Some parents volunteered their homes for Dragons rehearsals too and another helped the group I was in.

The 'Business Enterprise Group', as it was known, had two teachers and seven year 10 students in it, including myself. It was our job to advertise Dragons and draw the crowd.

We decided to buy plain blue wind-cheaters and screen print the Dragons logo onto them. They were sold to teachers, students and parents involved in the production. We designed, printed and distributed pamphlets advertising Dragons to every house in Terang. Posters with information about Dragons were placed in all our local shops. The newspapers in the district were bombarded with our advertisements and the PA system at school didn’t see a day without a Dragons advertisement of some kind.

When it came closer to the actual two nights of the production, our Business Enterprise Group worked non-stop to produce tickets and programs for both nights. As well as this, we printed menus and organised the Theatre Restaurant. With help, our Business Enterprise Group priced, organised and decorated this restaurant.

Different Home Economics classes made the soup, salads and desserts for the restaurant.

On the night, two hostesses welcomed the people to Dragons and ushers then led them to the reserved tables. It was here that two courses were served to the diners. Nineteen waiters and waitresses carried out this job well. The main course was a smorgasbord with a variety of salads.

After the magnificent performance, of course there was the cleaning-up. This again fell on the shoulders of our Business Enterprise Group. No-one seemed to mind however and everything was spotless for the next performance.

Both performances of Dragons were highly successful and any problems were overcome so well I can’t remember any drawbacks. The hard work was well worth it in the end. Everyone enjoyed themselves immensely and the celebration party at the end finished everything off well.

Ruth Smith
Business Enterprise Group
Terang High School 3264
It all happened on Wednesday 15th November. Students, teachers, parents, School Council representatives, State Government representatives and members of other school organisations gathered at the Preston Council Chambers to participate in activities on student democracy and political processes.

Michael Leighton, the local Member of Parliament for Preston was there. Unfortunately he had to leave early but he did take time to explain to everyone where his office is, what his job entails and how to go about contacting him.

Roger Holdsworth was there again, as he had been on three other occasions. During an activity that was introduced by Roger, everybody had to find their partner by asking a series of questions about the sticker that was placed on their back. Each person was only allowed to answer 'yes' or 'no'. BLACK had to find WHITE; DAY had to find NIGHT; BATMAN had to find ROBIN etc.

Everybody was divided into discussion groups. Members of the panel joined in. Some people were in Elvire Bucher's group - Elvire is an Electorate Officer and works for Brian Howe. Some people were in Ally Cashmore's group - Ally is a member of the Student Representative Council for Lalor North High School. Some people were in Anne Murphy's group - Anne is the Mayor of Preston. Some were in Pat Reeve's group - Pat used to be a parent representative on the State Board of Education. Others were in Joan Burrow's group - Joan is School Council President at Preston Primary School.

Every student was given the chance to ask questions of the panel representatives - about their jobs as representatives, how long they had been doing it, whether they got paid, if they enjoyed it etc.

A student from each group introduced the panel members who sat at the top end of the room at a large official-looking table. Scott was chosen to introduce Pat Reeve. As each panel member was introduced, they talked about their jobs.

Leah Hutchinson from Gowerville Primary School made an excellent speech thanking all the members of the panel for their part in the Junior School Council activity.

After morning tea, people were divided into two groups. One group was taken on a tour of the Council Chambers with the Mayor. Students and teachers sat around the Chambers and were given the chance to experience what it might be like to be a Council Member.
In the other room, students participated in a game called 'Challenge'. The object of the game was to identify the representative by placing the correct name to the correct photo. At the end of the game, students were given an activity sheet to take back to their schools.

Joe Corbett from Waterdale School Support Centre was there. He took everybody through an activity using the Parliament Pack. Discussion groups took place again and things were written down on butchers paper. The activity took about 40 minutes, by which time it was time for a lunch break.

Sandwiches, bananas and apples were soon eaten by everyone.

Twelve-thirty pm and time to return to school. It was a great morning's activity enjoyed by all students, teachers, panel members, Joe from Waterdale, Roger, Margaret, Mark and Julie.

Further Junior School Council activities will be planned for 1990.

Michael Malina, Leah Hutchinson and Sam Di Pasquale
Gowerville Primary School
Preston 3072

with Julie Walton
Preston East School Community Development Network
White Lion Street Free School

White Lion Street Free School, which opened in 1972 in Islington, North London, is Britain's best-known and longest-surviving free school. Despite enormous public interest in the school, no-one has ever attempted an assessment of it. Free School: The White Lion Experience starts to fill this gap. How did the children use the freedom the school gave them? What did they learn there? Was it really democratic? What were the successful features of the school? Did it work? These are some of the questions addressed by Nigel Wright in this new book.

Free School is not a comprehensive history of White Lion, and even less is it an 'official' description of the school. Rather, Nigel Wright, who worked at White Lion for over four years, offers his own lively analysis of the successes and failures of this extraordinary experiment in libertarian education.

Free School may be available through bookshops, but can also be purchased directly from the publishers, Libertarian Education, The Cottage, The Green, Leire, Leicestershire, LE17 5HL for 3.95 pounds plus postage. (ISBN 0 9513997 1 3)

Requests

Jerry Mintz from the US National Coalition of Alternative Community Schools (NCACS) has circulated information that schools in Australia may be interested in.

Firstly, the French alternative education network Autre Chose is touring high school age students in the US, and could be interested in a similar arrangement in Australia. They would need schools to host them as they travel round. They would also be interested in an exchange. Jerry has suggested contacting him, or you could write directly to 'Autre Chose', 88470 La Bourgonce, France.

Secondly, Jerry has asked about financial help for establishing community education for the Kee Way Win Indians who have returned to their ancestral land in Northern Ontario, Canada. More information from, and contributions to: Jerry Mintz, 417 Roslyn Road, Roslyn Heights, NY 11577 USA.

Self-Help Directory

The fifth edition of the Directory of Self Help Groups has just been published by Victoria's Coalition of Self Help Groups (COSHG). This lists around 700 Victorian self-help groups. The Directory costs $25 (funded organisations and wage earners) or $15 (unfunded organisations and low-income individuals) from Directory, COSHG, 247-251 Flinders Lane, Melbourne.

Which Way for the Curriculum?

The Curriculum '89 Conference of the Australian Curriculum Studies Association was held in Canberra in July.

The Report of the Conference has now been published under the title Which Way for the Curriculum? This includes the keynote addresses, summaries of discussion at the panel sessions, workshop reports (including that of the Issues in Student Participation workshop), abstracts of the papers presented and a comment on student involvement through production of the Conference news-sheet SOAP SUDS.

Copies of Which Way for the Curriculum? are available at a cost of $5 (cheques payable to ACSA) through ACSA (ACT), PO Box 806, Belconnen, ACT 2616.
Youth Participation: Influence on Youth Policy

The National Youth Affairs Research Scheme (NYARS), managed by the Commonwealth and several State Government Youth Bureaus, commissioned a study of the influence youth participation has on youth policy.

The report of that study has been produced by Colin Menzies and Paula Kelly. As well as providing an overview and analysis of forms of participation, the report outlines eight case studies and lists a total of sixteen examples visited.

The report concludes: "The importance of youth participation is central to youth policies. Those who seek none will develop poor policies because they will not know young people's goals. Those who encourage participation can use this report to design participatory activities to help achieve their objectives."

Youth Participation: Influence on youth policy is available from the Commonwealth Youth Bureau, GPO Box 9880, Canberra ACT 2601 or from the Youth Affairs Bureau or Division in your capital city.

Friends of Connect:

By subscribing at a higher level, the following have helped keep Connect going. We gratefully acknowledge receipt of the following financial contributions since the last issue of Connect:

SUSTAINING SUBSCRIBER ($100; 2 years):
Rowena Allsop Essendon, Vic

SUPPORTING SUBSCRIBER ($50 pa):
Vivienne White Balmain, Vic

PATRON SUBSCRIBERS ($20 pa):
Melbourne College of Textiles Pascoe Vale, Vic
Youth Forum Ltd Strawberry Hills, NSW
Peter Mildenhall Research, Vic
Margaret Batten Hawthorn, Vic
Orana Education Centre Dubbo, NSW
Adrian Stephens Ivanhoe, Vic

10 years! Fund-Raisers

In the last issue of Connect, an insert announced two new fund-raisers:

* the Connect Publications Fund: to help us move regular publication onto a firm financial footing;
* the Connect Facilities Fund: to build up modern production and recording facilities.

More details are contained in the brochure included in this issue.

The following contributions have been gratefully received to initiate these funds:

Publication Fund:
Marie Brennan (Thornbury, Vic) $25; Denise Sheridan (Benalla, Vic) $20; Youth Forum (Strawberry Hills, NSW) $15; L R Thomas (Broadmeadows, Vic) $5. TOTAL: $65.00.

Facilities Fund:
Marie Brennan (Thornbury, Vic) $25; Peter Mildenhall (Research, Vic) $10; Youth Forum (Strawberry Hills, NSW) $15; L R Thomas (Broadmeadows, Vic) $5. TOTAL: $55.00

WRITE!

We rely upon and welcome your letters and contributions. If there's something interesting happening, we want to know about it. Don't ask ... don't hesitate ... just sit down and dash off a brief (or long) description. If you have a photo or drawing, even better. We can't pay ... but we'll send you a free copy!
Local & Overseas Publications Received

Connect receives many publications directly or indirectly relevant to youth and student participation. We can't lend or sell these, but if you want to look at or use them, contact us on (03) 489.9052:

AUSTRALIAN STUDENT PUBLICATIONS:
Rave (Winlattun School, Vic)

OVERSEAS STUDENT PUBLICATIONS:
Foxfire (Rabun Gap, Georgia, USA) Vol 23
No 1 (#87) Spring 1989

OTHER SOURCES:
National Coalition News (NCACS, USA)
Vol 14 No 1 Summer 1989
Why Way for the Curriculum? (ACSA)
Youth Participation: Influence on Youth Policy (NYARS, Canberra, ACT)
Collective Notes (COSHG, Vic) No 46
November 1989
Options (Youth Bureau, Canberra, ACT)
October 1989
Media 3 (Rusden Media, Vic) No 33 Nov 89

Articles:

With this issue, we resume listing of some articles relevant to student participation. They are of background value or otherwise not appropriate for reproducing in the columns of Connect. However, they are available on photocopy for research purposes. The length and cost (copying and postage) are listed. Please order by code number. (A fuller listing is available in Connect 46/47 (to October 1987).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Description/Pages/Cost</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>334</td>
<td>Student Forum Report, Bayside School Support Centre, Vic. 28/4/89. 30 pp; $3.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>335</td>
<td>'Work-oriented programmes at the secondary level in Australia', Peter Cole; from Prospects Vol 19 No 1 1989. 10 pp; $1.00</td>
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For Sale:

Connect has limited numbers of copies of various publications for sale. An order form is included on the opposite page.

Students Publishing: Victorian PEP published set of case studies from Connect 1980–1985 on projects in which students have published newspapers, magazines, books etc. Cost: $2 (for postage).

Students and Work: Another volume in the PEP Connect reprint series. This contains case studies of work-based projects in which students are active participants in decision making. Cost: $2 (postage). (Larger quantities available on request.)


In addition, all back issues of Connect are available at $2 each. In particular we have larger numbers of #35 (Nov 1985) on student participation in primary schools.

SRC Pamphlets: produced by the Youth Affairs Council of Victoria in early 1988. These six pamphlets on: 'Why Have an SRC?', 'Making Decisions', 'Meeting Procedures', 'Being a Good Representative', 'Getting Ideas and Reporting Back' and 'Making It Happen' are excellent resources for student training sessions etc. Cost: $5 per set; $10 for a class set of any one pamphlet (20 copies); $60 for a class set of 20 copies of all six pamphlets; from Youth Affairs Council of Victoria, 14-16 Gertrude Street, Fitzroy, Vic 3065. Phone: (03) 419 9122.
Materials Order Form

Connect has some material available for sale. Use this form to order:

To: CONNECT, 12 Brooke Street, Northcote 3070 Victoria Australia

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   21, 22/23, 24, 25, 26, 27/28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37/38,
   39, 40, 41, 42, 43, 44, 45, 46/47, 48, 49, 50, 51/52, 53, 54/55, 56, 57, 58, 59

* Students Publishing - Connect reprint #2 ($2) ........................................ $ ........

* Students and Work - Connect reprint #5 .................................................... $ ........

* 'Youth Radio' issue of the CRAM Guide (3CR) ($1) .................................. $ ........

* Photocopies of the following articles (see index in issue 46/47) ........ $ ........

   .......... .......... ..........

(All prices include postage and packaging)

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