This issue has been timed to coincide with the First National Conference for Secondary Students in Canberra. It has been organised by the Australian Network of Secondary Students, in co-operation with the NYCA Conference and immediately prior to the Youth Congress being organised by the Youth Affairs Council of Australia, on the theme 'Social Justice and Australian Young People'. It looks like it is going to be an interesting and exciting week, and hopefully, we shall see a report on the outcomes in the next issue of Connect. In recognition of the ANSS Conference, we have printed some extracts from a draft document on curriculum issues. The ANSS Management Committee would welcome any feedback which you may have on the draft. The other articles in this issue comment on recent developments in the student participation field, and in particular, on projects being developed in relation to school and work.

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AUSTRALIAN NETWORK OF SECONDARY STUDENTS

On October 27-29, 1988, the First National Conference for Secondary Students will be held in Canberra. It has been organised by the Australian Network of Secondary Schools and many of the participants will go on to the Youth Congress, to be held by the Youth Affairs Council of Australia on 29-31 October 1988. The theme for the Congress will be 'Social Justice and Australian Young People'. If you are interested in going to the ANSS Conference at this stage, you should contact Sharon Burstill immediately, at YACA on (03) 537 1899. To highlight their First National Conference, we are printing part of a document prepared by the ANSS Management Committee, on Curriculum. It is a working paper, and Connect and the ANSS Management Committee would be delighted to get any responses which you may have.

draft curriculum paper

General Statement

The Australian Network of Secondary Students (ANSS), after a study of curriculum in secondary schools throughout Australia, recognises a need for increased student participation, in curriculum development. At present, decisions about curriculum are largely made by school administrators. If school curriculum is to develop and become more relevant to students, then students, parents, teachers and other education authorities must be involved in decision making processes. In particular, students should have increased input to make what they learn suited to their requirements. This can only be achieved by consultation and discussion, which would see students taking an increased role in their learning.

If students are to participate in curriculum development, more emphasis should be placed on skill development in classrooms. Classroom practices must facilitate the development of communication skills, organisational skills and greater understanding of political, social and economic issues. Schools must be flexible in order to encourage decision making on a partnership basis...

Accreditation is necessary for students who are involved in student participation. ANSS believes that this participation should not be regarded as extra-curricula but as an integral part of the learning process and so must be recognised in the curriculum. This recognition gives students the incentive to continue their work, and a place in the decision making process of education.
ANSS strongly believes a curriculum must not discriminate on the basis of gender, race, culture, religion or class. Any curriculum should take into account the need for relevant content, the varying abilities of each student and the need for student input into curriculum development. ANSS supports moves towards increased student participation and sees such moves as a progression from passive learning to a state which can help students develop to their fullest potential.

STUDENT PARTICIPATION

Student participation is a very complex and difficult concept. Student participation is when students have a say in what they learn, how they learn and what goes on in their schools and education systems. The effective implementation of student participation ideals can be very difficult at times, however, many students do genuinely participate in classrooms, student governments (e.g. Student Representative Councils) and student networks.

People often say that students do not have the skills and knowledge (e.g. public speaking, meeting procedures) necessary for effective participation. However, many Australian secondary schools do not encourage students to develop these skills and do not provide information on student participation. A change in school and community attitudes is needed for student participation to work. Students should be encouraged to participate and express their ideas, they should be encouraged to express their thoughts and values responsibility and given the opportunity to practically act upon these ideas.

This does not mean that students should have all the say in the running of the school. We believe that at present students are largely ignored by the education system. Students are the people that education is serving and yet they have the least say. Decisions regarding education should be made on a partnership basis. Students, educational authorities, teachers, parents and the community should each have an equal say.

ANSS believes that student participation:

- promotes competence and confidence
- encourages democratic ideals at an early age
- aids in the learning and development of the person
- promotes the ideas of the individual and social development
- aids in decision making skills
- encourages group and school spirit
- promotes maturity.

UNIFORMITY IN EDUCATION

Most Australian secondary schools aim at providing equal access to education for all young people. They offer a streamed core of compulsory, basic subjects (i.e. English and Mathematics) and a range of academic and practical options. Students and staff involved in the higher streams of compulsory subjects and in academic rather than practical options have the highest status in schools. This pattern exists within and across State/Territory borders. ANSS sees a need for this current school structure and curriculum pattern to be questioned and modified.

Education has always been left to state jurisdiction, as a result most States/Territories have adopted different systems. Although in the past this posed few problems because travel between States/Territories wasn't common now as we move into a technologically advanced world, there is a need for broader recognition of students' achievements.

Uniformity of credentials throughout Australia is desirable. Students need statements which truly record what they have achieved while at school. Such statements should
be easily understood and accepted by a wide range of employers and post-secondary educational institutions in different States/Territories. At present, credentialling systems vary and have not been explained adequately to the community. States and Territories have been and continue to review their credentialling systems: national policies and procedures are called for to facilitate these processes and to assist students to seek employment and courses to suit them anywhere in Australia.

SUBJECT CHOICE

The basic skills involved in reading, writing, maths and science are necessary skills for every Australian young person. However, ANSS strongly believes that it is equally important that students have the opportunity to study a broad range of subjects. We believe schools should offer subjects such as politics, mechanics and legal studies as well as maths, science and English.

It is important that schools treat all subjects as equally important in the overall learning process. Schools should encourage all students to fully explore the broad range of subjects open to them.

Subjects offered must:
- Be relevant to the lives of students and further their knowledge of the world they live in.
- Encourage students to explore the range of options open to them when they leave school.
- Provide students with skills that will enable them to continue learning after they have left secondary school education.

ANSS believes that school curriculum should:
- Directly reflect the community which it serves and be relevant to the past, present and future experiences of the community.
- Develop skills and knowledge in students that will be useful in their lives both today and in the future.
- Develop not only academic knowledge in students but also encourage the development of practical skills.

ANSS believes that any curriculum must be flexible. While it is important that there is a certain degree of common learning throughout Australia, it is equally important that subjects are relevant to the past, present and future experiences of the community. Schools that service communities with a large group of people from non-English speaking backgrounds, for example, should not ignore the different cultures but study them in classes such as history, English, maths, science and social studies.

Although a large proportion of secondary students are employed in casual jobs, career courses often only look at the range of jobs open to students after they leave school. They rarely deal with students' present situations or provide students with necessary information about their rights whilst in casual employment. ANSS sees that it is very important in courses such as careers for the content to include studies relevant not only to a students future but also their present situations...

ANSS believes that the best way to make curriculum relevant to students is to closely involve students in the forming of curriculum.
During the summer of 1987-88, Liz Wheeler and Peter Dorrell prepared a report called Passed Participation? on the experience gained with student participation in the Tullamarine region of Melbourne. The report was published by the Ministry of Education during 1988. Liz has kindly allowed us to print excerpts from it. The full report can be obtained from the Waterdale Schools Support Centre, cnr Waterdale and Doughty Roads, Heidelberg.

INTRODUCTION

The involvement of students in educational decision making over the last three years has been something of a quiet revolution. Student participation is perhaps an area where PEP could claim major successes. Over the last three years the whole debate about the place of students in educational decision making has changed. Students have come to be regarded as having an important and legitimate role in curriculum development and school government. Though major difficulties still exist, Student Participation has become established as an important part of the educational debate.

AT THE SCHOOL LEVEL

Beginnings...

When the Participation and Equity Program began in late 1984, the idea of encouraging students to have a say in what happened in their schools and their classrooms had been around for quite a while. Some people in schools (including students) had begun to realise that a lot could be learned by taking part in school decision making and that students usually became more interested and involved in their school work when they had a say in what happened. PEP took this notion a step further by acknowledging the need for support for student participation and then providing this support in the form of information, people (teacher time release and consultants) and money for student use.

With help from PEP and lots of commitment a few students, parents, teachers and consultants began the task of getting others involved in the struggle to have student participation recognised as a valuable learning experience.

THE SRC STORY...

When the $500 PEP grants began arriving in schools there were mixed reactions from members of school communities. Some schools had no idea of how to use their PEP grant, others immediately began to plan for student in-service activities. It was not long before almost every post-primary school in the region had an SRC. Their organisation and effectiveness varied from school to school and year to year (even term to term) due to a huge range of complex factors. However, over the three years of PEP's life there was a gradual movement away from no SRC or a controlled one to a variety of student participation activities.

Some SRCs seemed to confine their activities to organising fund-raising and student functions, are as in which they could develop skills in financial and organisational management. Others began to broaden their horizons to discuss and act on issues relating to school rules, curriculum and policy. The move towards more effective student government had begun.

Even with help from PEP, progress in student participation in schools depended greatly on the skills, energy, commitment and credibility of individual students and teachers. The support received from students, staff and the school administration also has a major
effect on the type and amount of student participation in a school. Many schools in the region gave Special Duties Allowances (SDAs), time release or both to Student Participation Support Teachers. In some cases curriculum related activities were approved and resourced (eg Student newspapers).

While the majority of students and staff remained passive, small numbers of highly active and enthusiastic students, supported by equally committed teachers gradually began to widen debate and activity.

"Other students only see changes such as opening common rooms, changing food in the canteen etc. They don't see our input into decision making because that's a slow process." (SRC representative)

And in classrooms?

Generally, student participation within classrooms has been an area in which breakthroughs have been few and far between. Issues such as accreditation, release from classes and support for participation in decision making structures have been widely discussed, but the issue of classroom participation has been somewhat neglected.

Somewhere the link between decision making (especially outside the classroom) and learning is not being made. It seems easier for teachers and students to talk about contributing to school policies rather than students making decisions about what they learn and how they learn.

Achievements

In spite of such difficulties many school communities in Tullamarine - have worked hard to develop decision making practices and curriculum policies which encourage students to have a say in what happens to their education. Over the years these schools have found many different ways in which students can actively participate in the decision making processes of their classrooms, committees and student councils.

SRCs are more effective, students are represented on more committees and are being taken more seriously. Negotiated curriculum is no longer such a threat, goal based assessment, cross age tutoring, activity based and pastoral care programs are on the increase. There is the growing recognition that student participation has benefits for teachers as well as for students.

Where to now?

The Participation and Equity Program has been quite successful in encouraging student participation in school decision making. Over the last three years we've seen increased participation by students in classrooms, student government and school committees. Although PEP has achieved quite a lot in its three year history, it is regarded by most people as only the start of a movement towards genuine and effective student participation.

"There needs to be commitment from staff and parents to the philosophy of participation. This commitment should be reflected in the school's organisation, for example: time release and changes to teaching practices." (SCDO)

The situation now is still one in which students fight to be taken seriously and to be given adequate support. The challenge is still to extend participation in decision making structures to the classroom so that all students may be involved. Quite often the close relationship
between effective learning, decision making and preparation for life in a democratic society for all students is not recognised by teachers and schools. This is one of the issues that needs to be addressed continually.

The achievements of students, teachers' and parents can be regarded as the first step towards real participation in which every student has a say in what they learn and how they learn. The responsibility now rests with every school and School support Centre to promote and actively support student participation in all areas of educational decision making.

AT THE REGIONAL LEVEL

In the beginning....

Although some schools in Victoria were encouraging students to participate in school development before 1984, it was virtually impossible to maintain student action in regions without support. Student participation needed a firm demonstration of commitment from higher levels if it was ever going to progress further than in a few individual schools.

When PEP began in 1984, there was a general feeling in support for student participation. The much needed commitment to decision making on a partnership basis was beginning to take shape and it was in this atmosphere that activity at regional levels began to flourish. Student participation was emerging as a curriculum issue that could not be ignored. PEP consultants took on the task of supporting individual schools and laying the foundations for student network.

A Student Network?....

The establishment of a student network was seen as a priority by many people. The Ministry of Education had allocated places for students on regional Boards but there was no way to elect these representatives and no means of supporting them. Consultants, students and teachers began to look at ways in which students could support each other and elect their peers to represent them....so began the Tullamarine Student Network.

The purpose of the Network was to:
- share information,
- provide support to individuals and schools,
- provide a forum for the discussion and publicity of issues,
- plan and organise meetings and in-services,
- be the group from which students could be elected to the regional Board and other decision making bodies at regional and state level.

One of the most useful functions of the network was to provide encouragement and support to students. Before its establishment, virtually the only contact between students at different schools was at sporting events. Students had no way of sharing ideas or problems, contact was usually based on rivalry rather than co-operation.

The Tullamarine Student Network operated on the theory that all students had worthwhile ideas to contribute and that a problem shared was a problem halved. Most people recognised that if students were going to succeed in participation then there had to be a system of co-operation and support.
Happenings...

During its three year existence, the network tried several approaches to supporting student participation in Tullamarine. Student participation was developing and students wanted to discuss a wide range of issues and ideas. Some SRCs began to keep in touch with schools in their area, inviting others to join their activities and forming small student clusters within the network. While lack of formal credit often meant that some students had to give up their involvement when they reached senior levels, at all times the network had a central planning group of about 15 to 20 students. This group played a vital role in keeping the Network a student body and in responding to student needs and interests.

Any Problems?

One of the greatest tasks faced by students in the Network, however, was trying to bring about change in their own schools. Regional inservices were highly successful in enthusing and motivating students who then raced back to schools to find themselves confronted with apathy at the very least. Support at the regional level could never act as a substitute for student participation at the school level.

Gradually the Network made a move toward a broader attendance, School teams of students, teachers and parents came to the Student Participation - Everyone's Responsibility conference and there have been requests for more of this type of activity in 1988. Over the past three years there has been increasing recognition of the need to involve teachers and parents more directly with student participation activities.

A final word...is it all worthwhile?

To what degree, if any, the network had an effect on the day to day experiences of students is hard to say. However, teachers and students involved in the Network have been highly supportive of the role it has played in maintaining the debate, providing contact with other students, providing support for students in their schools and sharing ideas. Despite the view that comparatively few students in any one school are affected by its activities, discussions have shown the continued existence of a network to be a high priority amongst students and workers.

TIME, CREDIT AND SUPPORT

Throughout the student participation debate PEP has argued that the key to effective student participation is in opening up the classroom so that all students feel they can participate in important decisions about their education (Mildenhall: 1987).

So far the greater concentration has been on activities outside the classroom, on SRC's networks and students as representatives, areas to which comparatively few students in the school can gain access. The question now becomes how to build the issues into a curriculum that is open to all, important to all and to which all students can contribute to achieving commonly agreed goals? (Holdsworth et al: 1987) In this
scenario full student participation is essential to the way in which the school is run and the issues of time, credit and support become the normal curriculum decisions of the school.

Few schools however are at the stage where they can always do this. The process is an evolutionary one and must develop slowly. If schools are to fulfil the aims of student participation every avenue that exists should be pursued. We do have students on decision making forums and together with teachers they continually cite the need for time, credit, the active support of staff administration, a student participation support teacher with time and specific responsibilities, regional consultancy, money, resources and a student network.

The proposals that follow are made as the result of the experiences of the writers and their colleagues; students and teachers in Tullamarine Region.

We hope that they will go some way towards encouraging support for students as they try to become more active participants in their own learning.

CONCLUSION

The overriding question that now remains is whether or not student participation had created enough of a groundswell to generate continuing support. Several publications are still to be released, including the report of the Ministerial Working Party. The educational climate has changed. We have yet to see whether participation has "passed".

The links between participation in decision making and learning have been made, they remain only to be promoted. As more teachers, students and parents become aware of the importance of participation to education we will move closer to the vision expressed in Ministerial Paper No.1. Decision Making in Victorian Education....

"The Government will implement a system in which people affected can participate in the decision-making processes and in which all students have the opportunity to develop the knowledge, skills and concepts to participate in a democratic society."
I begin to write this short article full of uncertainty and disquiet over the future of student participation in Victorian education.

Admittedly many great things are still happening -

* activities in schools towards energising SRC's or their equivalents,
* student networks operating, particularly in Southern and Western regions,
* students participating in representative groups including Regional Boards,
* student involvement in curriculum decision making and classroom activities,
* community involvement/projects by students, Cross-age Tutoring etc.
* a lot of primary schools establishing junior SRC's
* links being made between youth inside and outside schools, including the active support of local youth workers and so on...

Yet there seems to be a pervasive air of disquiet and uncertainty about the future. It seems to me that there are a number of related factors at work (not necessarily in order of importance!).

* the restructure of the Ministry of Education has meant that familiar faces, support structures etc. no longer exist - it has been hard enough for schools to relate to the new School Support Centres and Regional Offices, much less students who need access to personnel in the student participation area

* the loss of PEP cannot not be over-estimated as an influence; the grants to PEP schools' SRCs of $500, the Regional grants which allowed Networks to operate, consultancy support and the impetus and authority which PEP gave to the issue of student (and parent) participation has been sadly missed
* the fact that the Ministerial Working Party's Report on Student Participation - to which so many have contributed and eagerly await AND which has been 'sitting' awaiting endorsement and/or release for over twelve months is still 'in limbo', certainly has added to that air of uncertainty.

* related to the last point is that seeming loss of authority or 'push' for participation - no longer does student (and/or parent) participation seem 'flavour of the month'. (if it ever was!) The emphasis now is much more on teacher/curriculum issues such as implementing the new Victorian Certificate of Education (VCE) and Curriculum Frameworks. *It should be noted here that both the VCE and Frameworks do offer real legitimacy for student participation in both decision-making and in the classroom, however, it doesn't seem to be an important issue any more.

* the loss of key 'central' personnel who pushed the cause of student participation, in particular, Roger from VACVIC, Rosemary from PEP, Bernie from DSP, Damon from TAFE and others has left great gaps in a statewide perspective
to other, perhaps lesser, but still important factors
the difficulty that ANSS
(Australian Network of Secondary Students) has in getting financial support at either a Commonwealth or State level particularly, for the national conference where participants are expected to pay hundreds of dollars to attend,
the "moving' on of experienced students with a lot of background in the area leaving somewhat of a vacuum.
the difficulty in getting together an adult support group together for ANSS
...and so on...

Perhaps I'm a victim of paranoia/conspiracy theory/depressive blues?!! but when added together it all looks rather bleak. How accurate is this perspective? Too exaggerated perhaps? Where are the 'silver linings' on the dark clouds that surround us?

'CONNECT' itself remains a silver lining as does the enthusiasm and commitment of the many students, teachers and other support people still involved.

What else can be done?

Certainly students themselves, their SRC's, Networks, Reference Groups need to keep asking questions (and reminding people of current policy) at their school level, the School Support Centre, their Region - the Ministry as a whole!
The question of on-going financial and adult support is vital at all levels if the gains and impetus of the last few years is not lost. To end on an optimistic note: we ought to look forward, we need to remind ourselves of the powerful learning impetus that student participation gives to all that we do in education AND we need to make our individual and collective voices heard so that the issue remains a central one - as it should be!
SCHOOL AND WORK

Thanks to John Button and John Dawkins, schools and tertiary institutions have been encouraged to take greater account of how their curriculum and organisation will help young people to become more creative, resourceful and productive workers. Initiatives such as Project School Industry, in Victoria have attempted to support closer links between school and local employers, providing opportunities to examine the world of work activity and more thoroughly, with direct access to various parts of the industry. West Ed Centre has initiated a project which is looking closely at the concept of "transferable skills" and student research. Also in this section, we have printed an extract from some work by Bruce Wilson which argues that "economic imperative" will be met much more by encouraging students to take greater responsibility for their own learning and for curriculum decision-making, than by more centralisation.

TRANSFERABLE SKILLS

The link between school and work has been the focus of much attention over the last few years. It has been documented in publications like the ACTU/TDC "Australia Reconstructed"; the DEET paper "Skills for Australia"; the Youth Initiatives Unit (Adelaide) "Development of Enterprise Skills by Young People"; and many others both here and overseas. Conferences and workshops have been held on the subject with contributions from representatives of educational institutions, governments, business and industry, students and older age learners. As well, the Australian Studies component of the VCE will further entrench this whole area into our curriculum.

Against this background West Education Centre, at 34 Kingsville Street, West Footscray, initiated and funded a nine month project to look into this area. Specifically it is focusing on the teaching and acceptance of Transferable Skills (otherwise known as enterprise skills, generic skills, attitudinal skills) within the current curriculum, and community attitudes to these skill areas. Transferable Skills are such things as communication, team work, problem solving, conflict resolution, etc. These skills are increasingly being seen as important in the daily running of our lives and in particular to future employability.

In June of this year David Aaron was employed by West Ed to run the project. Initially there was a good deal of "Backgrounding" to be done. After this, approaches were made to several schools in the area. All were extremely interested and enthusiastic about the concept and the project outline, but being in the second half of the year had a number of logistical problems concerning their involvement. Eventually a Year 11 class at Braybrook High School became involved and a
little while later two Year 10 classes at Deer Park High School joined the project.

Essentially, what is involved for each class is their undertaking a research project for the rest of this year. Firstly the students are introduced to the concept of Transferrable Skills and through practical learning activities develop an understanding of what they mean. They then investigate how and under what circumstances students develop Transferrable Skills, and whether they are given credit for these skills, and if so in what form. Next, are teachers within the school teaching these skills, if so in what way and how are they giving credit for them. Then, is the school attempting to develop these areas within the curriculum? The research then switches to the community and the views of a wide range of different employers, unionists and parents are sought. Once the research has been completed the data collected will be sorted and collated and the findings presented in an appropriate format. We are looking to publish our findings and hope to produce some substantive curriculum materials as well.

The project is operating from West Education Centre. It is receiving considerable support from the Western Region Work Education Consultant - Peter Blunden. It is also a member of the 'Western Metropolitan Region Work Education Reference Group. For any further information contact David Aarons at West Ed., on (03) 314 3011.

PSI
Gary Ferguson PSI Victoria.

Project School Industry (P.S.I.) is now well established as an innovative and exciting means by which students can gain a practical understanding of how classroom theory relates to the world of work. Links can be made between schools and local work places, local government, voluntary organisations, small businesses, farms, homes, etc. P.S.I. promotes communication between students, teachers, employers, unions, community members and parents. P.S.I. is receiving a positive response from the community and there is a ready willingness by employers to become involved.

Recently, at a P.S.I. initiated breakfast, Mr Ray Averill of Kraft Food Ltd., delivered a keynote address on "Industry and Education: Future Links". In his speech, Mr Averill claimed that on-going changes in the world around us were placing added demands on industry, commerce, education and the community. He continued, "The Ministry of Education is rising to the challenge... P.S.I. is a more imaginative approach in assisting young people's learning, especially in regard to the world of work." Mr Averill expanded further saying that industry and the community should support the creative attempts by P.S.I. to link education with the world of work.

By including P.S.I. in the curriculum:
* each subject area can be linked with experience in the workplace highlighting the relevance of education;
* students can learn about workplaces, work issues, career paths, and work-related skills;
* students appreciate the value of their schooling;
* teachers can update their specialist knowledge and benefit from an improved relationship with students.

EXAMPLES OF P.S.I. ACTIVITIES:
/ Queen Elizabeth Geriatric Centre and Mount Clear Technical-High School.

Students from the Year 10 Societal Studies class at Mount Clear Technical-High School initiated a P.S.I. project with the Queen Elizabeth Geriatric Centre. Some of the aims of the project for students were to
develop a better understanding of how society caters for the elderly community, established closer links with the Centre and its residents and promote active learning. To this end a number of activities were organised:

a) production of a Monthly Newsletter for residents
b) a tour of the Centre by students
c) a tour of the school by the Centre's residents and
d) the production of a broadsheet to advertise the services of the Centre to the elderly in the community.

The project enabled students to fulfill their aims as well as develop a rapport with some senior citizens of the community.

2. BASF, Citizens Advice Bureau and University High School

Ms Marlene Falcone approached the P.S.I. Liaison Officer with a request for a program to be established, whereby Year 11 Graphic Arts students could gain a greater understanding of how Graphic Arts was applied in a professional setting. After a number of approaches to local industry and community organisations, BASF, a major video and audio cassette manufacturer, and the Melbourne branch of Citizen's Advice Bureau expressed an interest in participating in the program. Ms Falcone presented samples of the students work to the organisation at the initial meetings. Both organisations provided a brief for students. Students arranged meetings with each organisation's representatives to clarify the details of the project. In the case of BASF, students were requested to develop an illustrative flow diagram which depicted a manufacturing process. The Citizens Advice Bureau was looking at students producing a logo and a series of thematic posters for its 21st birthday celebrations in early 1989. At the time of writing, these projects were still in progress.
Liaison Officers for P.S.I. are now established in four regions in Victoria (see list below). During Term IV, Liaison Officers are keen to talk to schools, industry, commerce, community organisations and unions about ways in which links can be made in 1989. Project School Industry is funded by the Department of Labour under the provisions of Youth Guarantee. There is also a pilot scheme being undertaken in New South Wales.

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SKILLS FOR AUSTRALIA

All present assessments of future labour force requirements suggest that improved economic performance will depend on having workers who are creative, resourceful, cooperative, and innovative, as well as having a command of communication, mathematical, technological and social processes. Assessing the requirements is difficult, however, as the impact of structural change has further complicated the task of labour force planning...

What Kind of Education?

The analysis presented thus far suggests that there may be no necessary conflict between the government's determination that 'our education and training systems will play an active role in the process of economic adjustment which faces Australia' (Skills for Australia p6) and the more general objectives of educators. In the first place, there is widespread support amongst secondary and tertiary educators for the government's policy of enhancing the retention of young people in school and training programs, even though part of the intent behind the policy may be reducing the pressure on the youth labour market (in which full-time employment has been decimated over the last twenty years: see Sweet 1987).

Secondly, the attributes likely to be sought for the workforce of the future (effective intellectually and manually, resourceful, cooperative, and creative) can be seen to bear a close relationship with those identified by education systems. In Victoria, Ministerial Paper No.6. on Curriculum Development and Planning in Victoria indicated that,
...the Government's fundamental expectation of schools is that they further the knowledge, understanding and competencies necessary for young people to be able to:

a) participate effectively in the life of a multicultural society;
b) undertake worthwhile work; and
c) plan an active role in the processes through which our society is regulated and improved.

What kind of education is likely to be most successful in developing both these objectives whilst also fostering the attributes sought for economic development? The key to this question seems to lie in pedagogic practices which emphasise the importance of student involvement in decision-making. In the last decade there has been a greater priority on the development of curriculum practices which enable students from diverse backgrounds to learn in ways that reflect their own experience and prior achievement. The practical developments in schools have been complemented by advances in the psychology of learning, focussing on the importance of conceptual knowledge rather than just the acquisition of facts. The concepts of ability as something innate has also come under challenge (see White 1986, 5).

In practical terms, student involvement in decision-making about their learning and negotiation with teachers and other students has taken many forms and the scope allowed by teachers has varied widely. Inquiry learning, project work, small group, experience-based and social action strategies each attempt to foster student responsibility for the learning process. These strategies have been effective in reducing student alienation from schooling but they have also been powerful methods for improving educational achievement. The practice of reflective thinking about what should be learned and how, and learning to work with others, develops direction and initiative and enables students to find more effective methods for developing a command of particular knowledges and skills.
In the last issue of Connect, we presented details of some resources, drawn to our attention by Heather Bane at the School Community Involvement project in Victoria. Here are the details of some additional resources which may be useful to Connect readers. Thanks again, Heather.

UNLOCKING DOORS FOR TODAY’S YOUTH

UNLOCKING DOORS FOR TODAY’S YOUTH, is an invaluable resource book for teachers, youth workers, councils and others working in the area of community involvement.

It is a practical guide detailing how school-based community service can work.

Using the experience of teachers working in this field it provides keys to the variety of methods that may be used to develop effective community service.

Case studies show how students have grown in maturity and responsibility through voluntary contact with groups in their community. They show too how community involvement can be incorporated into almost any subject syllabus. Maths, history, commerce, science, physical education and industrial arts are some of the areas where schemes have been successful.

Project ideas and case studies will inspire new approaches among teachers and youth organisers, and detailed advice on organisation will help avoid common pitfalls.

UNLOCKING DOORS FOR TODAY’S YOUTH is available from the Australian Red Cross Society – Victorian Division, 171 City Road, South Melbourne 3205 for $15.00 ($2.00 postage and handling). Contact: Heather Bane (03) 616 9911.

Community Action Workbook

This is a workbook for school students seeking active involvement in their community. Containing sections on what is community, becoming part of a community, preparing for action, developing skills for community action and involvement with people with disabilities and older adults, this student workbook is an excellent way of introducing and preparing students for community involvement. Published by SCIP (New South Wales) and Collins Dove in co-operation with the New South Wales Department of Education.

Community Action Workbook costs $2.95 per copy, or $25.00 (per pack of 10, plus Teacher’s Manual). Enquiries: SCIP (03) 616 9911.

Everything You Always Wanted to Know About Volunteering But Were Afraid to Ask.

This workbook is designed to assist people to become a volunteer. It includes chapters on what do volunteers do, why be a volunteer, my strengths and weaknesses, how to find a volunteer job, how to prepare for an interview and rights and responsibilities of a volunteer. Published by James, Ross and Associates, this workbook is available from SCIP, 616 9911. Cost $3.00.

Activities For all Ages and Abilities

This is a book containing many games and ideas that students can use when visiting nursing homes, child care centres or centres for people with disabilities. Published by the WA Association of Occupational Therapists, this book includes mixing games, quizzes and think things, music,
movement and mimi games, arty crafty, physical games and lots more. Available through SCIP, 616 9911. Cost: $8.00

Video: Leading Out
"Leading Out" is a 26 minute video which uses examples of students' community involvement projects in Northamptonshire (UK) to illustrate its cross-curricular possibilities.

Although traditional placements are featured, there is emphasis on alternative approaches, often through group enterprises arising from students having identified a local need.

"Leading Out" can be used to introduce the idea of community participation and involvement to students of all ages (1/2 VHS)

Available for loan from SCIP, ph: 616 9911.

Publications Received

Australian Student Publications

FOCUS No 3. June - July 1988
(Hobson's Bay Secondary College,
FOCUS No 4, August-September 1988
(Hobson's Bay Secondary College,

Overseas Student Publications

NOUN People, Places, Things
Vol 10 No. 2. (Winter 1988)
Paradise Project, Edmunds Middle School, Vermont, U.S.A.

Friends of Connect

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PATRON SUBSCRIBERS ($20 P.A.)

Bill Stringer, Vic $20
Dept. of School & Field Experience, Melbourne CAE $20
Anzota Radio Group, Vic $20
Kevin Mc Rae, Whyalla S.A. $20

Other Sources

Collective Notes (COSHG, Melbourne)
33 August 1988
Collective Notes, (COSHG, Melbourne
34 September 1988
To: CONNECT, The Newsletter of Youth Participation in Education Projects,
12 Brooke Street, Northcote 3070 Victoria Australia

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