AUSTRALIAN EDUCATION
AEU
UNION

EDUCATION & SOCIAL ACTION

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Social justice, social action

&

education for all

ANN TAYLOR

ONE OF THE reasons that we at the AEU are passionate about public education is that we know it can make a real difference to the future lives of our students. It can also teach students that they can make a difference to our society and create a better future for all. The two are opposite sides of the same coin – social justice and social action. This edition of *Professional Voice* explores both aspects.

According to Wikipedia, the online encyclopaedia, social justice refers to "conceptions of justice applied to an entire society. It is based on the idea of a just society, which gives individuals and groups fair treatment and a just share of the benefits of society."

The term social action in relation to education is about how we work with students to explore ways to change society for the better—for all.

In times of uncertainty, instability and change, the importance of education for all is magnified. This is particularly true at present. The idea that we are moving towards a knowledge-based global society is not empty rhetoric, but a fact we face daily. At the same time we are confronting a swiftly rising disparity in resources between groups in our society, a division which is having a serious impact on the opportunities and quality of life for a significant proportion of the population. It is not just the wealthy few who should have access to the necessary ongoing opportunities that education provides, but everyone.

Tom Bentley, who was the director of the UK's Demos think tank and is now working in the Victorian Premier's Department, addressed the AEU's Principal Class Association conference in August. He talked about education being the "route to prosperity". Among the statistics he used to back his claim was this: a 1 per cent rise in a country's literacy scores—relative to the international average—eventually leads to a 2.5 per cent rise in labour productivity and a 1.5 per cent rise in GDP.

Bentley also talked about the multiplier effect on individuals of being in a community of low socioeconomic status: that for these individuals, disadvantage becomes entrenched and concentrated, and the gap grows between these groups and the rest of society. This is a serious issue for governments. In *AEU News*, September 2006, he wrote of the need for schools, systems and policy makers to work together to address the disadvantage: "Creating social equity and educational excellence together will require us to make it a core part of public education."

In this issue, Bob Peterson concentrates on the role education unions can play in defending public education and to "promote social justice teaching grounded in anti-racist and democratic classroom practices".

A long-time union activist and former TAFE community development teacher, David Kerin discusses young people's understanding of history, the need to take sides with oppressed peoples, and the role of democratic education.

The Whittlesea Youth Commitment is a collaboration of organisations in the City of Whittlesea supporting young people at risk to make the transition from school to further education. Megan Fox describes this project and some of its achievements.

The work of some of our schools in making a real difference for disadvantaged young people in Victoria and in East Timor is outlined in the articles about Cleeland Secondary College and the Australia/East Timor Friendship School Project.

Gilbert Burgh explores the difference between "democratic education and education for democracy". He argues for a model that combines both aspects in which students "are not only prepared for living in a democracy but where the classroom itself is a democratic community, where its members are prepared to apply their judgements beyond the schoolyard and into the wider community".

Kotare Trust Research and Education for Social Change is a small education trust from Aotearoa/New Zealand. Catherine Delahunty writes about their work using action/reflection models to encourage change that will lead to a more just and peaceful world.

Apart from articles on social justice and social action, this edition of *Professional Voice* contains the second part of the wide ranging interview with Richard Elmore that was started in the last edition. Part 3 is still to come.

The Role of
Education Unions
in Advancing
Public Education

BOB PETERSON

AS TEACHER ACTIVISTS, we focus on both defending and improving public education, and realise it is impossible to separate our efforts from the broader struggles of society. We know that public education will survive only if the public sector survives. And the public sector — the notion of a common good — will survive only if we defeat privatisation and neo-liberalism.

Teacher unions have a key role to play in defending the public sector for several reasons: our large size, our geographical breadth, and because we deal with one of the central matters that confront any society: how to raise its young.

So how can teacher unions effectively defend public education and the public sector? I believe this is best possible if we adopt what I call a social justice agenda, and view ourselves as social justice unions. We must be a strong industrial union, but this is not enough. We must be a union concerned with the profession of teaching, and recognise that, too, is not enough. Ultimately, we must see ourselves also as social justice unions grounded on an organising model instead of a service model, and explicitly embracing a social justice vision.

Social justice unionism has a dual strategy. On the one hand, we engage in the industrial and political struggle against market-based reforms and privatisation of public education. On the other hand, we simultaneously engage in a pedagogical struggle that promotes social justice teaching grounded in anti-racist and democratic classroom practices. Both struggles are essential for public education unions to advance public education.

IDEOLOGICALLY, WHAT PERSPECTIVES SHOULD INFORM SOCIAL JUSTICE UNIONISM?

In the broader political arena and in our classrooms, we must challenge the idea that freedom is equivalent to hyper-individualism, that democracy means little more than the rule of the unfettered marketplace, that military might is superior to reasoned negotiation, or that privatisation will serve the greater common good.

This ideological framework of individual consumerism reinforces the political framework of the Right Wing, which promotes individual "choice" and the marketplace as solutions to our social problems.

For example, instead of coming together as a community to solve problems that our schools face, the solution is "choice", so that the most privileged and affluent can choose to send their children to schools with similarly coloured and affluent children.

You can imagine how public school teachers feel about the double standard: the tightening noose of a federal education law demanding more and more tests in public schools, while money is being sucked out of the public treasury to finance schools without one iota of public accountability.

One reason the privatisers have found support among some urban communities in the United States is that public schools have historically under-served communities of colour. Teacher unions must work hard to reform our public schools. This means moving beyond the traditional industrial concerns of our unions and addressing professional and social justice issues. It might mean conducting anti-racist, multicultural training for our own members; opposing policies of tracking and streaming; rejecting notions of entrance requirements; or refusing to segregate the hard-to-educate students—whether because of disability or poverty or language.

Equally important, we need to go on the offensive and propose positive solutions. In my mind, the antidote is to reclaim the word democracy and to promote democracy in all spheres of society—political, social and economic. We should echo the words of Indian writer Arundhati Roy who says: "Privatisation of essential infrastructure is essentially undemocratic."

We must be careful not to be seduced by the Right Wing's misuse of the terms decentralisation or devolution. Some claim that decentralisation of big bureaucracies is inherently democratic; the Right in the US is fond of calling for the dismantling of the "government monopoly" of schools. I am the first to oppose bureaucracy, especially inefficient, hierarchical bureaucracy. But our experience in Milwaukee, where decentralisation has been taken to the extreme, shows that the result is that schools focus less on the quality of teaching and much more on the appearance of quality. It fosters a business model of management and it forces staff to waste time on inane financial matters.

Public education unions need to hold a nuanced perspective, supporting decentralisation that benefits teaching and learning, and opposing those aspects of decentralisation which hinder the improvement of education.

The bottom line is that education unions have to take responsibility to ensure that there are quality teachers in the classroom. This may mean changing long-standing

practices. We might have to examine policies in hiring or in evaluation or in staff development.

This is not an individual task for individual teachers, but rather an institutional issue that needs to be addressed by unions and school authorities through mentoring, peer assistance and evaluation programs. We must oppose the reductionist notion that intelligence or achievement can be quantified through the results of mass administered standardised tests. We must defend and where necessary create decent accountability systems that push educators toward sound practices. Australian educators have been international leaders in this area.

But on a planet as unjust and as unequal as ours, quality teaching must involve more than authentic assessment and good classroom practices. In a world so fractured by injustice, teaching must embrace social justice. We must help students to "read the word and the world", to use the late Brazilian educator Paulo Freire's phrase. We must engender "civic courage" and act as if we live in a democracy.

At *Rethinking Schools*, we encourage teachers to foster anti-racist attitudes, an atmosphere of questioning, and a classroom community that pre-figures the kind of society that we wish to create. We encourage kids to talk back to the media, their textbooks and the established order. We push students to ask questions, such as: whose voices are included and left out of children's literature, textbooks and math problems? Most important, *why* are certain peoples' voices left out? What is the relationship between poverty and wealth? Similarly, we encourage students to develop a sense of awe and appreciation for the natural world, and to understand that their natural environment is more threatened today than at any other time in human history and that they have the ability to do something about it.

When I speak to teachers at conferences in the US, I tell them point blank that it is our moral and civic responsibility to promote global justice education. The United States has less than 5 per cent of the world's population, but consumes over a third of the world's resources and produces 50 per cent of the inorganic waste. It has refused to sign treaties on global warming, children's rights, women's rights, landmines and the World Court.

Maths can be powerful in teaching social justice. For example, the US Government finally pledged $350 million in Tsunami aid after a great deal of international and domestic pressure. That seems like a lot, but I would challenge students to figure out what proportion that is of the amount the United States is spending on the War in Iraq—it's equivalent to only 1.5 days' worth of spending.

Social justice unionism must be guided by an ideology that promotes democracy over privatisation, fights national testing and rigid national curricula, works for more authentic forms of assessments, and encourages social justice education.

SOCIAL JUSTICE UNIONISM IN THE POLITICAL REALM

It's important for teacher unions to promote social justice in the classroom for two main reasons. First, it educates the students—future members of society—in how to be active, critical participants in that society. Second, it politically educates the teachers. In the United States, too many teachers don't know the real peoples' history of our

nation, whether it's the heroic resistance by the native peoples, the working-class struggles for justice, the work of women's rights activists, the movements against slavery and for civil rights, or the struggle against US imperialism. The more successful we are in promoting social justice education among our members, the greater will be their capacity and willingness to be active in our broader political campaigns.

HOW SOCIAL JUSTICE UNIONISM MANIFESTS ITSELF ORGANISATIONALLY;"HOW SHOULD WE CARRY OUT THESE TASKS?"

Unions should promote a social justice pedagogy that includes, but goes beyond, classroom practice. By this, I don't mean just passing a resolution at a conference, but really providing support. We need to help people see that, like the teaching of multiculturalism, social justice education can be woven into all aspects of the curriculum. The union can provide resources, institutes and workshops so teachers have the support they need and social justice teaching becomes more of a reality.

We should support the creation of schools where the staff are genuinely empowered and informed by principles of social justice pedagogy. La Escuela Fratney, the school I helped found 16 years ago, is one such example. We have an explicit commitment to a social justice curriculum and building classrooms as laboratories for social justice that prefigure the kind of society we'd like to create. Our whole school tries to operate on democratic principles. We view ourselves as a "learning community" and have a Community Learning Centre with before- and after-school child care. We are integrated into the broader communities that we serve.

Because of the politicised nature of our curriculum and our collective discussions, we often have the largest turnouts of staff and parents at union rallies and functions, and the union leadership often asks our teachers to represent the union at public events. As teachers, we foster "civic courage" among our students not only in our lessons but also by modelling that in our lives.

CONCLUSION

History teaches us that hope can defeat despair.

I tell my 10-year-old students at the beginning of each school year that we are going to learn about the great social movements throughout history and study some of the great conflicts of all time. I tell my students we are also going to look at current movements for social justice—like the movement for immigrant rights, the movement to end sweatshops and child labour, the movement to end the war in Iraq. I tell them that there will also be social movements in the future—and that it will be their choice; that it is up to them, as it is up to each one of us, to decide if we are going to participate in the great social movements of our time and intervene on the side of justice and life on this planet.

This will be our students' choice. It is our choice now. Let us continue to choose the struggle for justice. Let us choose hope over despair.

Education & the democratic process

A CASE STUDY

DAVID KERIN

Until one is committed there is hesitancy, the chance to draw back, always ineffectiveness. Concerning all acts of initiative there is one elementary truth, the ignorance of which kills countless ideas and splendid plans: that the moment one definitely commits oneself, then Providence moves too.

All sorts of things occur to help one that would otherwise never have occurred. A whole stream of events issues from the decision, raising in one's favour all manner of incidents and meetings and material assistance which no person could have believed could come their way. Whatever you think you can do or believe you can do, begin it. Action has magic, grace and power in it.

—Goethe

COMING FROM A specifically social action background into teaching community development has raised two major concerns for me.

The first concern is the extent to which young people entering community development and youth studies courses live with virtually no sense of Australian history.

The world appears to them disconnected: no sense of ongoing causality or historical ramification.

For many of them, events appear to have no history.

Polling my first-year students studying Working Within a Community Development Framework showed that only three out of 18 had studied history from Year 7 through to Year 12. They therefore had no context. Some questions asked were things that one might assume to be common knowledge:

- The eight-hour what?
- Who were the Allied and Axis powers during the Second World War?
- When did the Vietnam War occur and did Sylvester Stallone fight in it?
- What was conscription?
- Federation?
- Three levels of government?
- Land rights?

However, ask about *Big Brother* and you have a discussion on your hands. Don't get me wrong—lots of good, values-based discussion can be had around *Big Brother* and similar shows: being as distinct from having; how you become what you do; do unto others… However, that is not the point.

The point is that without a sense of history, people are easily manipulated and lied to. Indeed history shows that under these conditions, democracy stagnates as it is gradually replaced with radically right-wing legislation and forms of government.

The student/teacher task, stressed now due to a lack of historical context within which to discuss and debate, is to deal with my second concern—the degree to which popular culture has been de-politicised. Talking with students about Australian democracy, about democratic theory, shows once again another major point of disconnection. As with history, politics has taken a back seat to *Friends* World and American tele-culture within which Thatcher's theory—that there is no such thing as society—has been embodied. This is the seed-bed for Howard's far-right politics; all it asks is that you believe in nothing and consume.

So, how have we sought to move some of these very real problems and provide our students with the tools that a community development (CD) worker needs?

First we have applied our own theory: experience is the best teacher. We try to give people as direct an experience of social life as we can. For instance, at the moment, any CD worker must have an understanding of the Middle East, especially where our graduates are to work with Arab and/or Muslim Australian young people. We address the history of the region by providing direct experience of meetings, public forums, rallies and guest speakers. We seek out the voices of Australians originally from the Middle East and especially the voice of the oppressed within the Middle East: Palestinians, representatives of organised labour, women, religious and political minorities. And where do we go for the views of the Right? Well, the daily media is so very full of them that it is not an issue.

We teach students to stand with the oppressed. That is what CD work involves. And given that much of CD theory emanated from democratic educationalists such as Dewey, Holt and Haughton, and activists such as Alinsky, King (who trained at

Highlander with Haughton), Kenny and Ife, so—I believe—must education.

Education takes sides. The divide is not between objectivity and bias. The more objective you are then, if you are a democratic educationalist, the more sided you will be, the more bias you *must* exhibit on the side of the poor, the oppressed and the further extension of their rights.

Take the powerful example of Henry Reynolds (1999) and his reporting of attempts to present Aboriginal history more objectively in the Queensland curriculum during 1991. The Right united against the Queensland union's attempt to democratise the curriculum. Our students could not be taught that an invasion happened because, much as the Right chooses to behave as though it were not true, *the past does determine the present*.

Try to give "both sides" and what you actually give is a historical and political analysis which sides with the oppressor. That is not to say that we should disregard the voice of the oppressor; it simply recognises it as such a voice. Original documents, found by Reynolds and others, show us that the landed and military elite in early Australia knew that they were conducting a war against the Aborigines. At the same time, what they were engaged in was a "normal" process of colonisation for that historical period. Indeed we can see that violent occupation and overthrow of existing norms is still a "normal" colonial practice; witness Palestine in 1948 or current American and Australian policies in Iraq.

In his brief but amazingly full booklet, *Two-Way Enquiry Learning*, Neil Hooley does not even begin to discuss education thoroughly until he has looked at the questions of justice, equity, participation and cultural understanding. In other words, he looks at the cycle of values-practice-values formation-practice, then looks at the education process as an ongoing part of that cycle.

To repeat, the past is never physically separated from us, because its consequences persist. Only a socially integrated, democratic education system can help us to process our interactions with the world, shaping it more and more in a participatory direction.

It is valuable to look at Melbourne *Herald Sun* columnist Andrew Bolt's views, but only from a perspective of democratic, inclusive and participatory values. Looked at from such a perspective, Bolt's views would move us along the Howard road as against a participatory democratic process.

Education has to seek the truth. Our *values* determine what is true for us. All actions and ideas are value-laden; it is illusory to pretend that there is such a thing as a spectrum of equally valid values, ideas and actions.

Yet the Right has sought to bully democratic educators and community development workers into deserting the field on this question. Take Bolt again. He has referred to Victoria University CD as the "Kremlin of the West"; he has driven home the attacks upon RMIT academic Robert Austin (Melby 1948), who encouraged his students to attend a student union rally, by supporting his sacking.

Bolt has attacked teachers and academics for preaching instead of teaching, while doing exactly the same thing in relation to his own profession. Bolt, arguably politically to the right of Howard, is an establishment-supported bully who seeks to

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fix false criteria by which to judge education: it must not preach. Yet any discussion of values, surely one of the largest component parts of a rounded education, will in the literal sense of the word involve "preaching": talk of the lived life of values made with all the passion a teacher can muster; just as Bolt does himself with his style of "journalism".

Bolt's lived life of values, however, is a very narrow notion of representative democracy that does not include the economy, and which therefore settles for a world where the needy are thus only because they cannot find the means to become successfully greedy.

People such as Howard and Bolt serve a tremendously valuable purpose: in a very radical way they are reshaping our representative democracy, the direction it is taking globally and nationally and the nature of Australian self-determination.

Moving in the exact opposite direction to a democratic education model, the theoreticians of the Right have forced their agenda at a speed and to a depth within the culture that many thought impossible, with such radical changes as the reversal of public education at our universities, dismantling of much of the original Medibank, de-unionisation of around 80 per cent of the Australian working class, involvement once again in an unjust and illegal war and, especially, the creation of a legislative framework which is colouring Australian politics with a fascist undercoat.

Alternatively, by applying a community development framework to education, we must grapple with exactly the same question with which the Right has wrestled: how can education be used to change the Australian democracy? The difference for us is in the direction. We are surely working towards a deepening and broadening of the democratic process. Democratic educationalists inevitably work towards the creation of an informed and aware population capable of inventing new, more directly democratic forms, which add to the representative democracy, making it more responsive to the needs and interests of the vast majority. Indeed democratic educationalists are surely working towards a participatory democracy.

Or, alternatively, we are not!

Such a community development framework accepts as a given that everything, including democratic and educational theory and practice, is in evolution. The slave owners of ancient Greece were the only people allowed to vote within the Athenian democracy; early capitalism saw only the property owners allowed to vote; then only men could vote until women won what was called "universal suffrage" in 1908 in Victoria (actually only 100 years ago in 2008); and it was much later again that Aborigines were classed as full citizens and could vote.

While democracy was established over time through major revolutionary struggles, we saw it rise and fall to monarchist reaction on a number of occasions. Finally representative democracy won against those born to rule through the "divine right of kings".

Now, the evolution continues. Our species and the democratic ideal risk extinction under the neo-liberal agenda of Bush, Howard and Blair.

What is asked of democratic educators working within a community development framework is that we broaden and deepen the democracy (Newman 1998).

The discussion for us must inevitably hinge around the question of empowerment (Kenny, Ife); this is central to community development. At the moment, the merely representative model of democracy does not allow Australians to intervene to change harmful directions which an elected government may take. There is no democratic infrastructure throughout our communities, workplaces and schools which empowers the vast majority with an ability to realign unhealthy government decisions.

With planetary ecology and world peace at stake, we cannot leave power in the hands, solely, of representatives who are in turn locked in to the irrational tendencies of the global market.

> The economy, that place where most of us spend the bulk of our lives, is not the subject of any democratic infrastructure. In fact we have all grown up within a political culture, which has taught us that such a democratic workplace would be expressly undemocratic because it might limit the right of employers, the smallest of minorities. So we have stalled at a politically representative democratic model, which rests for its wealth creation upon an undemocratic economic structure, where we are taught to believe that the majority are incapable of truly knowing their own needs and interests. (Ife 2002:171)

If we look at education we see moves by the Right to push it backwards towards a feeder-tray for industry. We see them attempting to halt the evolution towards an education system which deals holistically with the person, which creates a critical student, aware of rights. Instead of playing a role in developing people who can advocate on behalf of others and therefore themselves, we see the Federal Government opposing at every turn the idea of successful collectives as being harmful to industry, government and the nation.

This iconic struggle, back on the agenda after nearly a century of cold war confusion, is between the Right and democracy. In that struggle, democracy will not evolve along healthy pathways without an engaged education system.

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WHY INDIGENOUS EDUCATION PROGRAMS
cannot succeed without a critically reflective teaching practice

INSTITUTE OF KOORIE EDUCATION
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NOT FOR THE first time, Indigenous education returned to the headlines last year. It is hard not to think that the sporadic but intense debate and the renewed and revised government initiatives again generated heat but not much light. The time has come to ask: is Australia's education system even asking the right questions?

Successive federal governments have introduced a number of strategies to improve Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander student outcomes in literacy, numeracy and school retention.

Some gains have been made; however, a large discrepancy remains between the educational outcomes of Indigenous and non-Indigenous students in Australia. The Department of Education, Science and Training's *Accelerating Indigenous Education Outcomes* report (October 2004) states:

> *On many measures, recent results for Indigenous students (have) improved since national testing began in 1999. Still, Indigenous students have lower literacy and numeracy skills than other students—67 per cent of Indigenous students achieved the Year 5 reading benchmark in 2001 in the national assessment compared with 90 per cent of other students.*

The question needs to be asked then, given the numerous government educational initiatives, why haven't Indigenous student outcomes improved more rapidly and more dramatically in the past two decades? Is it that the types of programs which have been implemented are flawed, or is there a more deeply rooted systemic issue impacting

on student outcomes? How can socially just educational experiences and outcomes be generated?

The current approach is clearly not working, and examples of "better practice" reveal more about the school culture itself than about how to achieve improvements in Indigenous student literacy, numeracy and retention rates. For example, the DEST-funded *What Works* website provides exemplars for improving Indigenous student attendance and retention rates, but the case study provided by a Northern Territory school is paternalistic and unreflective. In one section the school principal describes the role of Aboriginal education workers as follows:

> *They are a very important source of information, sensitivity and above all can be seen as successful role models. In addition they can be the integral link between the school and the home. In relation to Indigenous staff, in many cases, they can give an insight, based on sensitivity, respect and cultural awareness, into the complexity of relationships between school and family.*

On the surface this reads as a positive statement. Aboriginal education workers play an important—in fact, a crucial—part in Indigenous education. But a critical appraisal is required of what is actually being said. The Aboriginal education worker is not presented as an equal member of the professional staff but rather as a tool that non-Indigenous staff can use better to understand the "complexity" of the social milieu Indigenous students come from. While non-Indigenous teachers must learn to engage with Indigenous students and their communities, they should also question how they normalise white middle-class nuclear family models and view Indigenous extended family models as different or deviant from the norm.

The statement also idealises the Aboriginal education worker as a role model for the Indigenous students within the school, without questioning whether the role model being presented is also one which obviously occupies a differential power status within the school hierarchical system. Despite their importance, Aboriginal education workers do not occupy the same status, or enjoy the same pay and benefits, or the same security of tenure as do most qualified teachers. The unspoken message presented by the school principal is one which acknowledges hard work and commitment, but refuses to acknowledge the lack of status and inferior benefits afforded to Aboriginal education workers.

This is not an inconsequential point. As Welch (1988:206) succinctly puts it: "Education often serves as an instrument of internal colonialism by socialising the colonised into an acceptance of inferior status, power and wealth." This *What Works* exemplar does not identify whether there are Aboriginal teachers employed at the school, only the role of the Aboriginal education workers and the crucial role they play in mediating the black–white divide. The onus is not placed on the white teachers within the school system to recognise and negotiate different cultural ways of behaving; rather it is the duty of the Aboriginal education workers to mediate between the two.

The main difficulty with many of the exemplars offered on the DEST *What Works* website is that most convey a paternalistic and patronising attitude, and none attempts to challenge the underlying issue of pervading social structures and how these impact on the educational outcomes of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.

As Tracey Bunda and Alia Imtoual (2006:29) point out, the literature in the field of education and whiteness has not developed substantially in this nation to impact on the teaching of race and social justice. They argue that in a climate where politics seeks to influence educational content and pedagogy, educators and education policy makers must become engaged with issues surrounding difference and begin to engage with the hierarchies of knowledge. They must seek ways of empowering communities to build supportive and substantive relationships between themselves, educators and researchers.

Importantly, they call for a teaching ethos which is reflexive and which critically engages with difference.

It is crucial that cultural differences are acknowledged and inform teaching practice. Social justice cannot be realised by preaching the need to treat all students the same. Students are not all the same, and culture and race directly impact on their educational experiences in a myriad ways. The students' Aboriginality should be recognised and acknowledged. Social justice cannot be realised by claiming that colour is irrelevant and all students should be treated the same. Colour is relevant, as is culture. To not acknowledge colour or one's culture, to assume a colour-blind/culture-blind stance in the attempt to be equitable to all students in the classroom is as dangerous as pejoratively stereotyping students solely on the basis of their colour. Applebaum (2005:283) explains the inherent dangers of colour-blindness as follows:

> *Firstly, colour-blindness obscures the positive and cultural contributions of race to individual identity … Secondly, colour-blindness not only ignores the positive contributions of racialised groups, but also ignores or denies the systemic harms that people of colour experience. In a world where race still matters, refusing to take race into consideration results in the dismissal of systemic oppression.*

The fact that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students have endured "systemic oppression" across every educational sector has resulted in the mediocre educational outcomes that governments now decry. Rather than retaining a gaze on these lower than mainstream (read: white) educational outcomes, it is timely for educators and policy makers to examine the very institutions that perpetuate these outcomes, and the role dominant social institutions play in continuing to propagate subordinate educational attainment. Governments do not speak in terms of colour or culture, but by avoiding any discussion of these issues, or refusing to acknowledge the lived reality of being non-white in a white Australia, they will continue to fail to address the causes of educational inequality.

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For Applebaum, "the colour-blind approach ignores the contemporary social reality of racism and obscures not only the race of the victims of racism but also dispenses with the need to interrogate whiteness as the invisible norm by which others are marginalised" (Applebaum 2005:284). Furthermore, the colour-blind/culture-blind mentality can be used to explain inequality by blaming either the individual or his/her subordinate group and its cultural characteristics (Applebaum 2005:285). The latest government Indigenous educational initiative betrays such a colour-blind mentality.

The newly introduced "mutual-obligations contracts" between students, their families and schools will place the onus for improving the educational outcomes of Indigenous students on the children themselves, their families and their communities. There is an underlying assumption that since children will be obliged to attend school, their very attendance will result in better educational outcomes. That carries a hidden implication that if they do not succeed it is due to a deficiency within the individual student rather than any systemic problem within the education system itself, and the social, political and economic institutions it serves. The reality is that until systemic problems are addressed, and until educators acknowledge how their whiteness is complicit in the marginalisation of Indigenous students within the education system, this latest initiative will also fail. Keeping students in class five hours per day, five days per week, for some 30-odd weeks per year, will not raise the educational profile of Indigenous students, because systemic problems will continue to remain.

As long ago as 1999 the Coolangatta Statement claimed that education, and the measurement of educational outcomes, do not reflect "Indigenous standards, values and philosophies. Ultimately the purpose of this education has been to assimilate Indigenous peoples into non-Indigenous cultures and societies." The statement continued: "…The so-called 'drop out rates and failures' of Indigenous peoples within non-Indigenous education systems must be viewed for what they really are—rejection rates." Indigenous students will continue to reject the education system and its values until the system itself reflects on its white western knowledge base and acknowledges other ways of knowing.

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WHITTLESEA YOUTH COMMITMENT

getting active for the future

MEGAN FOX

THE WHITTLESEA YOUTH Commitment (WYC) is a collaboration of organisations in the City of Whittlesea, supporting young people as they make their transition from school to further education, training or employment. The WYC has been an active group since 1998 and continues to lead the way as an exemplar model of social action for better outcomes for young people in the local community.

In 1998 the Northern Melbourne Area Consultative Committee commissioned an action research project to investigate the impact on young people of the introduction of the Youth Allowance. The project identified a lack of connection between the various agencies working with young people (schools, TAFE institutes, adult community education providers, Whittlesea Council, community support agencies, Centrelink and the Job Network). In addition, the project identified a low level of systems knowledge among young people.

Research undertaken by the Dusseldorp Skills Forum showed that, across Australia, significant numbers of young people were not in work or education, or were in part-time work with no training. It also showed that 70 per cent of those at risk of long-term unemployment were early school leavers. It is obvious that retaining young people in school or ensuring they have a training or employment base when they do leave school is of benefit to the young people themselves and in the interest of the community as a whole.

The research showed that the City of Whittlesea had a low retention rate (at 71 per cent) in comparison to other regions, and high unemployment at 19 per cent. Nearly 35 per cent of the students who left school in 1998 did so without completing Year 12 and at the time had no known destination. The prospect of these early school leavers becoming long-term unemployed was high.

The local data was presented in a series of forums within Whittlesea and as a result of those presentations to key stakeholders the Whittlesea Youth Commitment was formed.

The establishment of the Hume Whittlesea local learning and employment network (LLEN) in 2001 presented a challenge which became an opportunity for the WYC. A strong collaborative relationship has been developed with the Hume Whittlesea LLEN whereby the management committee of the WYC is recognised as the local planning group for Whittlesea within the LLEN.

A number of key initiatives characterise the work of the Whittlesea Youth Commitment; all support the outcomes and related performance indicators of the Victorian Learning and Employment Skills Commission LLEN Performance Agreement.

Traditionally, school accountability ends when a student exits; this changed for the young people who live in the City of Whittlesea when the secondary schools applied to the Department of Education and Training (as it was then) for funds to appoint a "transition broker". The submission demonstrated the collaboration between organisations, which is the essence of the Youth Commitment.

From July 1999 a project worker was employed by the eight secondary schools and contacted those young people who had left school in Term 1 that year without a known destination. Although some were working or in TAFE, others were not. Valuable information and ongoing support were provided by the project worker to those young people who were not in full-time employment, training or education.

Of the 24 young people who participated in the trial, four returned to secondary school, eight actively sought work, six went on to further education, three commenced traineeships, one gained full-time employment and two obtained casual jobs. Such was the success of the program, the WYC now has four transition brokers working across six of our local secondary schools who continue to provide a one-on-one service to young people leaving secondary school or who are "at risk" of leaving.

Of the many initiatives in Whittlesea, it is the work of our transition brokers which continues to provide substantial, tangible and effective outcomes for young people. The transition brokers provide a case management approach to working with exit student or students "at risk". They provide valuable and up-to-date information about employment, education and training options. The transition brokers use formal pathways planning methodology and keep confidential files and records. It is through the Managed Individual Pathways (MIPs) funding from Epping, Lalor, Lalor North, Mill Park, Peter Lalor and Thomastown Secondary Colleges that we are able to continue employing transition brokers.

By 2002, the apparent retention rate for young people in the City of Whittlesea had increased to be equal to the statewide average; historically the retention rate had

been consistently below average. Research undertaken by Peter Cole on behalf of the principals of the government secondary colleges has demonstrated that the transition brokers have had a significant impact on improving early school leaver destinations, with a decline in unknown or problematic destinations.

The transition brokers are supported not only by the local secondary schools but by the WYC Committee of Management (CoM), the WYC community team and stakeholders. This links the transition broker team to the following services and agencies: Adult and Continuing Education (ACE) providers, Centrelink, Job Network providers, the Jobs Pathway Programme, Kildonan Child and Family Services, TAFE institutes (in particular NMIT and Kangan Batman TAFE), group training companies (in particular Apprenticeships Plus), Whittlesea Council, Whittlesea Housing, other secondary schools in the region, adolescent health services and welfare agencies.

In 2003, transition brokers received laptops funded by the City of Whittlesea council, allowing them to work with the Active 8 Timepoint Pathways Database program developed by the Dusseldorp Skills Forum. This enables them to record all early school leavers and current client data, and generate a variety of up-to-date reports.

The stakeholders of the WYC continue to take ownership and respond to the work of the transition brokers. From the time the first transition broker commenced reporting aggregated data back to the WYC CoM, the community team and the secondary college principals, there have been many collaborative responses to the issues highlighted and discussed. These include: mentoring young people disengaged from education, training or employment; employment forums and career activities; taster programs at TAFE; youth voice research and activities; establishment of a school industry network; joint research with the Epping office of Centrelink; research undertaken on behalf of the Whittlesea secondary college principals; and curriculum responses such as shared provision of VET programs.

The WYC community team comprises a staff member from each local secondary college and operational staff from agencies who work directly with young people. The team provides opportunities for the full range of agencies to work together to address the needs of particular young people with multiple barriers to employment, education and training. It identifies gaps in services and proposes to WYC agencies and the CoM ways to improve collaboration and service delivery to provide a seamless service to young people.

The community team is a distinguished feature of the WYC and is an attempt to take a broad integrated approach to the transition process for young people. The school sector has for some time been focused on improving retention; the training and adult education sectors have been developing equivalent pathways for young people; Centrelink and Job Network employment services have been assessing their capacity to respond to the needs of young people. Bringing together these various approaches is leading to new relationships being created across agencies and organisations in the highly fragmented field of youth transitions. For example, the proactive engagement of Centrelink in the community team has streamlined the process for young people accessing Centrelink services.

Further examples of social action among the team have been the Access and

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Equity forum, the employment fair, the publication of an annual "School Leavers' Guide", the facilitating of a Learning Choices forum and the commitment to ongoing "readiness for work" workshops for students.

The careers teachers of the Whittlesea secondary schools identified the issue of completed Year 12 students not accessing entry-level vacancies and training opportunities. This was discussed by the WYC community team and as a result an Access and Equity forum was hosted by the WYC pathways development officers at NMIT in Epping in October 2005. The objective was to facilitate a forum where schools, youth agencies, group training companies, Job Network organisations and employer groups could come together in a collaborative way to discuss the issues and look at strategies to achieve better outcomes for completed Year 12 students not going onto university or TAFE.

As a result of the forum the community team will pursue the following activities with the support of all WYC stakeholders:

- Co-ordinate engagement of Job Network and Centrelink industry with schools and parents
- Communicate information to schools and parents
- Increase membership of the community team
- Expand industry links, approach industries especially where there are skill shortages, and promote specific industries
- Draw up a calendar of events to ensure advance notice of events post third-round offers
- Highlight importance of advocacy for young people in terms of their potential
- Maintain good relationships with employers
- Provide ongoing follow-up for students.

Another example of a collaborative community response of the WYC community team was the Employment Opportunities fair held in February 2005 and 2006. The Whittlesea Careers Group identified that a large number of young people from their schools had completed Year 12 and were not engaged in any form of further education, full-time employment or training. The completed Year 12 students were tracked and invited along with early school leavers. Some 92 young people in 2004, and more than 115 in 2005, attended and engaged in one-on-one conversations with Job Network, Centrelink, industry groups, Youth Pathways program, mentoring groups and group training companies. This was an opportunity for local industry with skill shortages to connect with young people to find immediate employment or training opportunities. Another fair is scheduled for February 2007.

The Whittlesea Youth Voice project aims to ensure the WYC is youth-driven, focused and responsive. In 2004, a report, *Discovering Youth Voices within the City of Whittlesea*, funded by Hume Whittlesea LLEN, was compiled from the findings of surveys conducted with disengaged and "at risk" young people in Years 9 and 10. The project found that young people wanted to participate actively in their local community and be able to express their opinions and be involved in making decisions that affect their lives.

The Youth Voice project is resulting in greater involvement of young people in the WYC. The establishment of a Whittlesea Youth Voice Team aims to continue the work

of the stakeholders in ensuring that the aspirations of young people actively shape the development of the Youth Commitment. This group of young people—predominantly comprising VCAL students from local secondary schools—works collaboratively with other youth participation groups in Whittlesea on initiatives such as youth forums and summits as well as the development of projects such as a youth website and radio program. Youth representatives are also being incorporated into the community team and the committee of management.

To understand and experience true social action for improved education, training and employment outcomes for young people leaving secondary school, you can start with the City of Whittlesea and the WYC. This Youth Commitment is made possible by its stakeholders' dedication to driving it and improving outcomes for all young people within the local community. The WYC has maintained a collaborative drive and focus on its young people since 1998. The WYC was alive long before the commencement of Local Learning and Employment Networks and will continue as long as there are young people residing within the City of Whittlesea. Social action has made a change in this community.

For further information about the Whittlesea Youth Commitment contact the pathways development officers at the Youth & Community Partnerships Office of RMIT University on (03) 9925 7774.

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TAKING A WHOLE SCHOOL APPROACH TO CHANGE

Cleeland Secondary College: a case study

RACHEL POWER

PRINCIPAL DAVID FINNERTY thanks columnist Andrew Bolt for prompting radical changes in his school. Bolt wrote that Cleeland Secondary College, one of the most multi-cultural in the state (87 languages at last count) and with a high influx of first-phase immigrants, was one of the state's 23 failing schools.

Finnerty set out to prove him wrong, making targeted use of funding to introduce a plethora of programs that have turned his school around in the past five years. Central to his strategy was building the capacity of his staff to meet the complex needs of Cleeland's students.

It was a decision that put social justice at the heart, not just of the curriculum and teaching methods, but of the school's overall approach. Cleeland is committed to equity for all of its students, providing a context in which they are given opportunities to thrive regardless of their backgrounds. As the central means by which children and their families are integrated into the community, the college has also embraced its role in shaping broader community attitudes.

Cleeland Secondary College is located in one of the most depressed urban communities on all indices in Australia. Refugees and first-phase immigrants make up a large proportion of the student intake, with traumatised children arriving from every war-torn point of the globe, including Eritrea, Sudan, Somalia and Palestine.

While Finnerty recognised his teachers' dedication and their individual efforts to build relationships with students, he saw that conventional training was not sufficient in preparing them to meet the highly complex needs of Cleeland's particular cohort. In a groundbreaking move, the school is supporting all interested staff members to undertake a Masters of Education degree at Monash University as part of a whole-school approach to addressing student needs.

Finnerty is also acting to have the particular contribution of schools such as Cleeland recognised by the state. As part of the ministerial taskforce on publication of VCE data, he has been instrumental in broadening a formerly narrow results-based set of criteria for assessing schools to a more holistic measurement of a school's worth to its community. Cleeland builds its pupils' confidence by celebrating every achievement, not just academic success, as a mark of how far the student has come.

The first point of placement for new immigrants whose first language is not English is the Noble Park English Language Centre. It offers students a dedicated bridging program—usually for two terms, but extending to a year or longer if necessary. Schooling here is traditional, but with an emphasis on acquiring language and numeracy skills before transferring to the mainstream curriculum.

Some of these children, such as recent arrivals from Sudan, have never attended school or lived in an urban community. They immediately commence an immersion program in literacy, numeracy and acculturation. "One of the first things we do," says Finnerty, "is take the kids out and explain what a road is and why you don't walk down it."

Each year between 40 and 100 kids transfer from the language centre into Cleeland Secondary College, representing a significant part of the school's total population of approximately 600. Other sizeable groups include those excluded from other schools or transferring from the private sector because of behavioural issues or changed economic circumstances. Finnerty has a policy of never turning a child away.

Assistant principal Sue Goodwin says the Masters degree was a response to feedback from staff that they wanted training to deal with the complex needs of students. The school covers its cost using equity funding. To Finnerty and Goodwin's surprise, 30 staff members enrolled.

The course offers modified units within a traditional three-year Masters framework. A purpose-designed, coursework-based program, delivered at the school by Monash University lecturers, it focuses on language and literacy across the curriculum, with particular reference to the needs of refugee and ESL students. In this way, teachers focus on matters of direct relevance to their teaching practice.

Monash has asked Finnerty to undertake a PhD tracking the changes at the college. The University is also evaluating the Masters program—associate professor Brenton Doecke sees it as "a wonderful opportunity to review traditional offerings"— and collaborating with Cleeland staff to develop a research project that will assess classroom practice and the subsequent value of the Masters to students.

"There was a sense that traditional PD models wouldn't serve (staff's) needs," Doecke says. "They all had an impressive amount of professional experience behind them, (but) they needed to be engaged in systematic and sustained inquiry to meet

the needs of the school." Sue Goodwin believes the validation of good practice offered by the program has encouraged staff to take risks. "The professional dialogue in the staffroom … is now at a whole different level."

The chance to work together and support each other through the Masters has been an important aspect of the teachers' willingness to take it on. Mary-Anne Allen, a music teacher and SSO, says teachers traditionally work in isolation whereas the Masters was a catalyst for collaboration. "We're sharing resources, data and ideas and that enhances what we're doing in the classroom."

More important was the recognition that acknowledging issues related to students' backgrounds wasn't enough; they needed to do something about them. A third of Cleeland's students have been in Australia less than two years. Many are not living with family and most are in short-term emergency housing. Some do not know their birth date or even their age. As a result, says Goodwin, any sense of stability is really important to them.

The school needs to take a holistic approach, connect people with the school community and be honest about the challenges these families face, she says.

"Our role in the school is certainly about educating them and allowing them the opportunity to develop the skills to make them more productive citizens, but in order for us to deliver on that, we have to take into account all the other issues because we can't move forward with the learning until we have the trust and the relationship."

Drawing on international expertise, the college has contracted US educator Dr George Otero seven days a year. Otero is co-founder of the Center for Relational Learning (CRL) in Santa Fe, a consultancy which assists schools and other organisations to open new avenues of learning and collaboration.

Otero runs one full curriculum day and spends the other days in classrooms and staff meetings, working with teachers to build constructive relationships with students and each other. Staff have been so impressed that 16 of them paid $4000 each to attend a two-week immersion program at Otero's Santa Fe centre. Teachers trialling the relational learning and emotional literacy ideas they brought back report a marked improvement in their students' response.

In addition to the Masters program, Cleeland is one of only two schools to offer a streamed ESL VCAL, specifically targeting the needs of students from the Horn of Africa. More radical moves have been the abolition of key learning areas, and the creation of curriculum team leaders and a professional learning team at each year level, responsible for curriculum design, delivery and implementation, and welfare and wellbeing.

The school day is also now configured differently, with lessons extended from 48 to 72 minutes, compelling teachers to offer greater variety. "They can't chalk and talk for 72 minutes," says Finnerty. Class sizes are kept to a minimum.

The purpose is to treat each student as an individual. "Every child will respond differently to different learning stimuli," Finnerty says. "Teachers must deal with the complexity of that and then put on the layer of language and access … to effectively engage our kids in [the] pedagogical process. What we are now doing is constantly within a lesson changing up what we are doing every ten or fifteen minutes."

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Other innovations include the Cleeland Learning Centre—Myuna—which houses an outplacement program for kids who have posed problems in mainstream settings, either for themselves or others. Finnerty has also been heavily involved in Operation Newstart, a 10-week program run in partnership with a wide range of government and non-government agencies including Youth Assist and the Department of Human Services. It uses wilderness therapies and other self-esteem-building activities to help kids critically at risk of becoming involved in crime. Myuna has a 40-45 per cent success rate; Newstart's is even more impressive, with 97 per cent returning to school, further education or training, or getting a job, according to Finnerty. The school is also involved in the No Dole program, which prepares Year 10 students for employment or training.

Fundamental to Cleeland's philosophy is a focus on the "whole person". The school develops a personal profile for each student, which celebrates all of their achievements, from holding down a part-time job, to being part of a sports team, to getting a D in English. ("Grade D for many kids is a (major) leap in their learning," Finnerty says.) With national and state champions in a number of spheres, sport plays a key role in this.

Sue Goodwin says that if students feel connected to their school they can explore other opportunities. "In essence it's based on relationship," she says. Cleeland staff "really get to know the kids, allowing them to feel comfortable and accepted and valued… Having worked in a large variety of schools, coming into this place I believe the sense of harmony and goodwill among the kids is remarkable."

In five years, the entire operation of the college has changed, with student learning outcomes firmly at the centre. In the Department of Education's 2006 Attitudes to School Survey, morale among students at Cleeland scored in the top 2 per cent of schools in Victoria; school connectedness and student motivation were both in the top 3 per cent; while for learning confidence, Cleeland was in the top 1 per cent. For Finnerty, those statistics prove that the school's transformation is working.

"The kids are the most connected of kids across the state."

Education & Civic Responsibility[1]

GILBERT BURGH

AS ECONOMIC DIFFICULTIES intensified in the 1990s, Australia's leaders in business, industry and the unions, as well as its politicians, expressed the need for greater attention to educational reform, for "a new age of 'cleverness' in which brain power will help us to *think* our way out of trouble" (Boomer, 1999:16). Despite the enthusiasm and promises, there remains a schism between the rhetoric of educational reform and the contemporary life for which the classroom prepares students, namely the need for a reconstruction of teaching, learning and curriculum development in order to produce citizens able to deal with the challenges emerging from a world in transition "characterized by a continual reorganisation of systems which are increasingly interdependent, requiring skills, not of routinisation, but of collaborative problem solving" (Kennedy, 1995:160).

The irony of current government attitudes to education in Australia "is the tendency to engage in large scale policy 'dreaming' about knowledgeable nations, about smarter states, about intellectual isles, and so forth—while it continues to invest in inward looking, compilationist approaches to curriculum and pedagogy" (Luke, 2002: p.8). This charge has serious implications for contemporary democratic societies and attitudes towards education. Even among policy makers who profess a commitment to the goals of lifelong learning there is a tendency to see education as predominantly

providing a means for enabling individuals, organisations and nations to meet the challenges of an increasingly competitive world, to the neglect of involving people in a continuing process of education aimed at self-actualisation and a learning society.

A distinction can be made between democratic education and education for democracy (Burgh, 2003a, 2003b; Burgh, Field & Freakley, 2005). Democratic education refers to the view that schools should embody decision-making structures that facilitate and foster meaningful participation by all members of the school community. Although restructuring efforts have in practice been more rhetorical than real, democratic education not only provides opportunities for students to participate in decision-making; it also purports to enhance their cultural experiences through learning and sharing. As the history of progressive education has shown, some schools heavily emphasised social reform within a framework of participation in school governance while others were less permissive, leaving administration mainly to professionals with varying degrees of input from students and parents. AS Neill's Summerhill school exemplifies a very permissive self-governing school.[2] The community of students and staff make their own laws, which pertain to situations that arise from community life. Neill shared Rousseau's belief in non-interference; that freedom exists only where students govern themselves in an environment where they are able to learn and play at will. To this he added a Freudian dimension, postulating that freedom was desirable not only because it enabled children to be natural, but because it was also therapeutic, empowering children to escape repression, hostility and guilt.

Currently, there is a diversity of educational approaches among alternative and progressive schools in which students are involved in planning and decision-making.[3] Typically, the school community shares in the planning of daily activities, to voice problems or concerns, and to vote on issues that need resolving. On the other hand, attempts by governments over the last decade or so to reform educational practice have put emphasis on teachers who work within the state education system to "structure their teaching while at the same time challenging children and *expecting* them to use their brains in focussed and creative ways" (Boomer, 1999:16). Subsequently, the differences in teaching practice between alternative and progressive schools with a reform agenda in mind and that of their state school counterparts have become less acute in recent decades, but the emphasis on a student-centred curriculum and the degree of student and parental involvement in school governance continue to be salient differences.

By contrast, education for democracy has as its primary goal the achievement of an educated citizenry competent to participate in democratic societies. This is to be achieved *not* through participation in school governance, but through enabling students to deliberate and to think carefully and critically, in order to help them articulate and support their views. What is crucial is that education develops in students a sufficient degree of social understanding and judgment so that they have the capacity to think intelligently about public issues. Philosophy for children,[4] with its commitment to the community of inquiry, is considered by many of its proponents to be invaluable for achieving desirable social and political ends through education for democracy.

Matthew Lipman (1991), whose formulation of the concept of the community of

inquiry lends itself to education as reconstruction, thus making it relevant to current educational reforms, characterises the community of inquiry by five stages. Four of these stages are distinct areas that could be considered progressive stages of inquiry: (1) *reading and observing*, where stimulus material—which must be potentially problematic—is used for initiating inquiry; (2) *suggesting*, which is a distinctly creative phase, with the purpose of generating ideas and hypotheses, stating conjectures or expressing opinions or points of view; (3) *deliberating*, which focuses on critical and creative thinking—two essential elements of the thinking process integral to good reasoning; and (4) *concluding*, whereby the reliability of collective judgements are tested. The remaining stage is the *communicating* stage. Whilst not a progressive stage of inquiry, the communicating stage underpins and is prior to the other four stages of inquiry. This stage is characterised by the caring aspect of inquiry which inextricably links community and inquiry, i.e. being a member of a learning community and caring about the process of inquiry.[5]

According to Ann Sharp (1991) the community of inquiry is an educational tool for the cultivation of democratic character in students and the fostering of a sense of community, which are both pre-conditions for active participation in democratic societies. Lipman (1991) is quite clear that the community of inquiry represents "the social dimension of democracy in practice, for it both paves the way for the implementation of such practice and is emblematic of what such practice has the potential to become" (p.249). Thus, the community of inquiry provides a model of democracy as inquiry, as well as being an educative process in itself. Interestingly, Lipman contends that the aim of the community of inquiry is "not to turn children into philosophers or decision-makers, but to help them become more thoughtful, more reflective, more considerate, more reliable individuals" (Lipman, Sharp and Oscanyan, 1980:15). Emphasis is not placed on school governance as a means of developing habits such as self-regulation, nor on rendering "problematic the whole life of the classroom community and its curriculum" (Boomer, 1999:106). Instead he prefers philosophical problems as the pedagogical means to cultivate democratic values.

A comparison between Neill's Summerhill and Lipman's Philosophy for Children highlights the differences between *democratic education as school governance* and *education for democracy*. At one end of the continuum we have a fully democratic school which fosters self-regulation, freedom and self-governance, and at the other, a model committed to the development of democratic dispositions that are requisite for active citizenship. Many critics of democratic education are either cautious of or antagonistic towards school governance schemes intended to liberate students through progressive practices such as student participation in the development and evaluation of educational practices and the curriculum, and in the life of the school community. Mark Weinstein (1991) contends that school students have neither the responsibility nor the deliberative competence for making actual decisions on school policy. Not surprisingly, he concurs with Lipman, and argues against the extension of deliberative process to areas such as policy-making. Students must learn deliberative strategies not through participation in school governance, but by focusing on issues in such a way that enables them to learn and that is not to their disadvantage.

In addition, Weinstein not only has reservations about bringing democracy into the classroom, he seems to find a limit to the community of inquiry and what he sees as deliberation in the wider context of public decision-making.

Let us suppose for the sake of argument that Weinstein is correct that democratic education cannot, and should not, be a miniature democratic society in action. Suppose also that Lipman (1988:51) is correct to say that the fostering of democratic dispositions is necessary to democratic life, more so than the preparation of good decision-makers. My contention is that neither the practising of inquiry skills in the classroom community of inquiry nor participation in school governance are sufficient conditions for facilitating active, democratic citizenship. A necessary requirement is the capacity for self-governance; the purposeful application of inquiry skills; and the construction, testing and application of knowledge to concrete situations so that these situations are transformed into meaningful experiences. Democratic education places no obligation on those seeking democratic reform to introduce measures in the way that, say, AS Neill did at Summerhill. Likewise, education for democracy should not condemn the inclusion of student participation in school governance. To reiterate, neither participation in school governance per se nor the practising of inquiry skills in the classroom should be considered essential attributes for facilitating active, democratic citizenship. Rather, students must be actively engaged in reflective thinking and thoughtful action (both essential features of informed practice integral to self-governance) regardless of whether such engagement takes place as participation in school governance or as classroom dialogue.

If democratic societies wish not to suffer from a dearth of civic literacy, what is required is a model of democratic education in which students are not only prepared for living in a democracy but where the classroom itself is a democratic community, where its members are prepared to apply their judgments beyond the schoolyard and into the wider community. There is, of course, no guarantee that this will happen, but what is important is to strengthen and enrich the lives of children and adolescents and prepare them to no longer accept without question the multitude of pressures with which they are confronted (Splitter and Sharp, 1995:182). Peer pressure, political ideologies, stereotypes about masculinity and femininity, drugs, alcohol and tobacco, advertising and new information and communications technologies are pervasive in modern culture. The impact that these and other social pressures have on the young is difficult to measure in terms of the gap between the culture of a society and support for existing social and political institutions. It is not enough to say that schools need to be effective agents for social change. Making judgments about what a good life is lies at the heart of citizenship education. But a concern for such matters requires caring about such things. The fostering of critical, creative and caring thinking prepares students to make better judgments and contribute to the democratic processes as active citizens who care about what really matters—living qualitatively better lives.

ENDNOTES

1   An earlier draft of this paper was presented at Education and Social Action Conference, Centre for Popular Education, University of Technology, Sydney, 6-8 December, 2004. See Burgh & Davey (2004).

2   Neill published twenty books, as well as other material, describing his views on education, and in particular the activities of Summerhill. See esp. Neill (1960a, 1960b, 1992). Since Neill's death in 1973 the school has continued to be run by Ena Neill until her retirement in 1985, and currently by their daughter Zoë. Summerhill has not fundamentally changed since it started in 1921.

3   A current example of schooling that acknowledges the importance of student participation in the governance and administration of the school is Brisbane Independent School. The BIS curriculum is individualised, allowing children to learn at their own pace, and to have a direct say in what, and how, they learn. For more information, see bis.primetap.com/

4   What is often referred to as the "philosophy for children movement" is also variously known as "philosophy in schools", "philosophy with children" and "philosophical inquiry in the classroom". These terms can be somewhat confusing as the methods that underpin philosophy for children also have been adapted for use in tertiary classrooms and elsewhere. What the "movement" has in common is that it belongs to the tradition of reflective education, but what distinguishes it from other approaches to education that employ philosophy as a method for teaching and learning is that it is grounded in Lipman's classroom pedagogy and Deweyan educational theory and practice. Note that the term "philosophy for children" and its cognates do not apply to "Socratic Dialogue" developed by Leonard Nelson and Gustav Heckmann or other educational approaches that teach Socratically or that use philosophical inquiry. Generally speaking, Philosophy for Children (upper case P and C) in its early stages referred to a particular methodology, curriculum, syllabus or program founded and developed by Lipman, and later to a discipline with its own set of materials, in which Lipman's materials played a significant role. Unless otherwise specified, philosophy for children (lower case p and c) will refer to a sub-discipline of philosophy with its own history and traditions.

5   For a description of the pedagogical principles for developing communities of inquiry, and a critical examination of how a practical philosophy program can integrate pedagogy and curriculum, see Burgh, Field & Freakley (2005).

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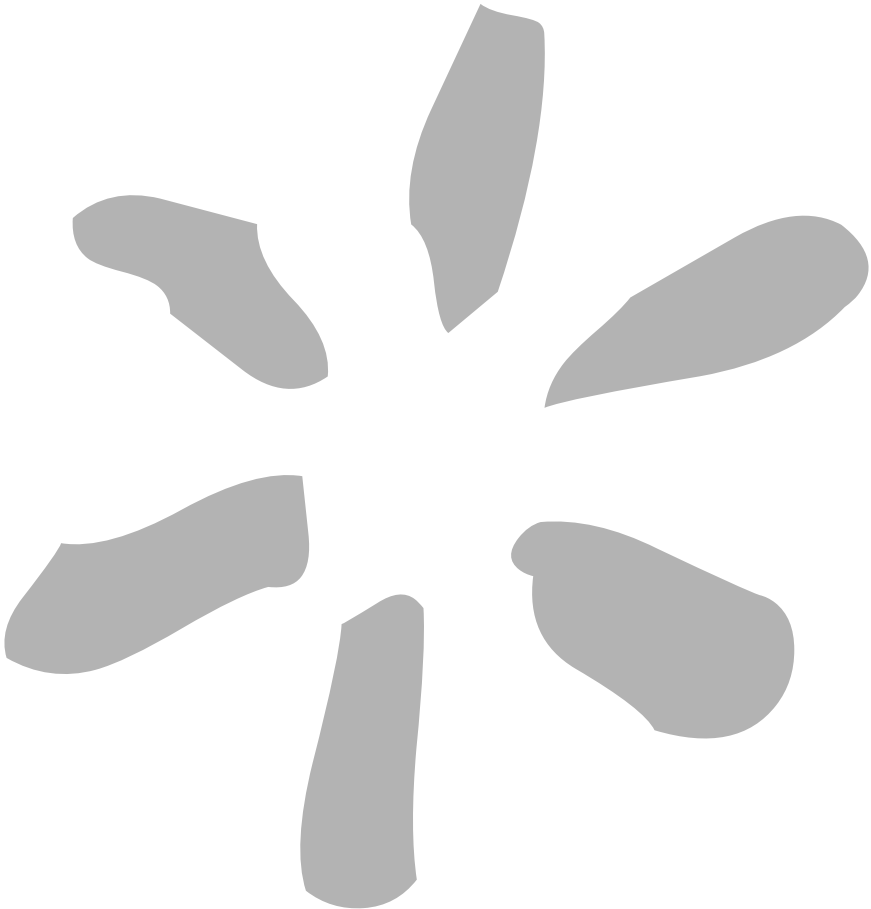
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Education For Action

CATHERINE DELAHUNTY

KOTARE TRUST RESEARCH and Education for Social Change is a small education trust from Aotearoa/New Zealand. We stand proudly outside most current educational paradigms since our mission is progressive social change not qualification based, outcome-measured learning.

We are radical educators who focus on action/reflection models and work with people aged 14 to 80 years on issues of importance to them, but not of importance to their potential employers in the so-called "free market". Kotare Trust is based north of Auckland and has been providing radical education programs for six years at our Centre and throughout the country.

We are not professional educators in the usual sense but facilitators with an unashamedly political agenda and a vision of a just and peaceful world. We challenge conventional educational methods as survivors ourselves of some dull and mechanistic learning environments.

RESPECTING INDIGENOUS CULTURE

Kotare Centre is based in the lands of Ngati Whatua Ki Kaipara, on the border of Te Uri o Hau and Ngati Wai; however, working nationally means entering the territory of many indigenous groups. Kotare was originally developed by Pakeha (Western European settler descendants) and is still predominantly Pakeha. But since we occupy their country as well as work with indigenous participants and tutors, we are on a

journey towards defining an appropriate justice-based relationship.

The issues of culture, racism and indigenous rights are fundamental to teachers, and we have to hold up the mirror to even begin this journey.

INSPIRATION

Radical educators such as Paolo Freire from Brazil and Myles Horton of the Highlander Research and Education Centre in Tennessee inspire Kotare. We are also mainly inspired by the passionate 14-year-olds who work with us on rebuilding community and naming oppression. We are inspired by radical church workers and unionists who come to our centre to form coalitions with anti-racism networkers and environmental activists. The mission of Kotare is to weave the threads of social challenge and change from unemployed lobbyists to women's liberation centres, from anti-globalisation activists to rural community development workers. We are interested in the meaning of leadership in collectives and the meaning of education for social action. In a world where the "Ism brothers" (racism, sexism, capitalism and able-bodyism) control so much of the educational framework, it is liberating to work with people's wisdom, not lecture them from the blackboard or whiteboard.

The participants in our workshops are usually already socially aware and active but we have a key role in encouraging, supporting and strategising with them to increase their passion, skills and networks. After six years of evaluating our diverse programs, we have recognised that we essentially offer two main types of learning experience: "strengthening" and/or "conscientising".

TUTORS

Our tutors are a mixed bag of creative people, the most dynamic having no qualifications or PhDs, but who all have activist experiences to call upon when working alongside community groups and individuals working for change. Because we work only with small groups, often in residential programs, we can develop a different learning environment and a different level of empathy and exchange in our groups. Our tutors always work in teams of ideally three people, sharing the responsibilities.

A month with Kotare Trust might include leading a gathering of sewage activists exploring barriers to cleaning up waste, including analysing racism and cultural beliefs. It might see two of us leading a participatory workshop at a women's conference about social work versus social change. It might include a planning session with a community group, or an implementation workshop for community workers on the Treaty of Waitangi (founding agreement between the Indigenous people and Crown). We could offer junior youth training in non-violent direct action, and a community economic development national brainstorm on strengthening grassroots networks.

Working with young people might see a mock protest outside a pretend vivisection laboratory with stuffed toys representing the laboratory animals. In order to help them explore it we might get the vegetarians to defend the laboratory and the carnivores to paint the arguments for animal liberation on their placards. Then we might pretend to arrest them all and drag them through a mock courtroom where they don't get heard. They have fun and they get angry. Then they critically analyse what happened and what they learnt.

LIVING EXPERIMENTS

When Highlander workshops are described to people who haven't experienced them, it often sounds like we are always contradicting ourselves, because we do things differently every time, according to what is needed.

We've changed methods over the years, but the philosophy and conditions for learning remain the same. There is no method to learn from Highlander. What we do involves trusting people and believing in their ability to think for themselves.

—*Myles Horton*

Kotare educational methods are essentially experiments based on some key ideas. Paolo Freire speaks of the "banking method" of education as a mirror of oppressive societies. His simple exposure of power issues in "the teacher teaches and the students are taught" and education as the "exercise of domination" guides us in all our workshop planning and implementation.

ACTION/REFLECTION MODELS

Action in our classroom means taking hold of an issue and actively working with it, whether it's developing a skit, mapping corporate power in your community or painting a vision of community self-determination.

Action is the essential creative dimension to the workshop and to life itself. However action is pointless without the thorough and extended processes of reflection. The reflection process always surprises the group with the diversity of feelings and experiences just one situation can stimulate. The action allows non-verbal and quieter students to shine. The action/reflection model exposes any weakness in planning and any lack of sensitivity to the individuals in the group and their confidence to participate.

Our planning, our agendas and our power issues are challenged by the principle of starting where people are actually at, not where we want them to be. To even recognise where people are at, let alone work with it, requires both processes and experiences that are not taught during education training. We cannot hold rigidly to a program if we want the sessions to work for the people who have come together. And if it doesn't work for them why are we doing it? .

We might work with music videos with young participants to deconstruct the gender and cultural issues that these videos present. In decolonisation workshops we always start by naming and celebrating the cultures of all participants before challenging people to explore the myths of colonisation. Empathy and analysis has to be built from their own experiences to a broader picture. Often the observable movement in their understanding seems small and slow, but our evaluations tell us that it is the movement from where they started that is important.

EDUCATION & SOCIAL ACTION

STRUCTURAL ANALYSIS TOOLS

Our structural analysis tools (power analysis tools) come from a tradition developed across the world in the 1970s and 80s but with the contextual twist that every group or tutor likes to bring.

An example is "The Wave" (developed by many, but to this level by Christine Herzog), a drawing of the world which uses reef, wave, forest, hills, people etc to depict the understanding that within a given issue, that issue looks different depending on where you happen to be standing.

Whether you are surfing that wave or collecting pipi (shellfish) on the beach you will see the wave differently.

There are many ways of using this tool for an in-depth analysis, but my favourite is to develop role-play using furniture and a choice of hats to explore positions in relation to an issue. There are a range of next steps once those positions have been identified.

Kotare is constantly adapting our tools to see if they are relevant to whom we are working with and to make them more participatory. Our role is to sharpen the edges of understanding. We try to heighten the experience, not perfect the handout.

To build a learning experience and a group, everyone needs to name the issues they have brought with them.Whatever the topic is—from dealing with the police to understanding the effects of multinationals in our community—the starting point is always the participants' experience.

People are more than capable of naming the issues that create barriers to progress in their communities. They name issues at many levels and this work becomes a rich source of material for the workshop to deconstruct. The next step is deciding what changes they want to make.

ROLE PLAYS/SKITS

Despite the initial panic and fear that adult learners have around drama, we use role play and skits to identify and resolve problems. We train ourselves in safe role-play techniques so that these sessions can be powerful and useful rather than emotionally overwhelming.

Music and painting are also a regular part of the programs and we try to write our own songs, design slogans, and make painting and drawing a key aspect of our community mapping exercises.

FINDING OUR THEMES AND PEOPLE

On a regular basis the Kotare trustees and staff do our own analysis of the key themes impacting on our world at this moment. This is based on an examination of the current context and the issues raised by our participants and networks. In one year the themes might be environmental injustice, living wages, colonisation and Pakeha identity, and alternatives to corporate globalisation.

We maintain responsiveness to new issues raised by groups but some themes are seemingly eternal, such as the way school authorities treat students who challenge them.

Kotare is neither driven by numbers nor willing for anyone to participate in our programs, providing they pay their fees. We reserve the right to choose with whom we

work and we select and foster particular groups and students who can relate to our programs as useful to them and their communities.

We find people and groups through our trustees, members and networks, which we actively maintain. The key criterion for targeting people is their real engagement with social change work. We specifically target young people, women, poorer communities, and rural and urban marginalised groups.

Being socially aware and active is not training but a process so we encourage our participants to continue their work and to expand their analysis. It is very different from taking a cross section of a community and trying to teach them to be active for change. If the spark is there we can feed the fire. And for many people who are bored, ignored or overawed by conventional learning and know in their hearts that the world is in trouble, Kotare is a refreshing change.

ASSESSMENT AND EVALUATION

Our funders want outcomes. We want change. Our timeframes are immediately in conflict. We do not subscribe to detailed predetermined learning objectives or outcomes. We do carry out a detailed analysis with our participants, tutors, support staff and our monitoring committee, as to what works, what needs changing, and where our programs are going.

We worked with one group of young people who had attended the annual high school youth program at Kotare for three years, and then asked them to assess the program. Their assessment of Kotare was that it was "cool" and "nothing like school" and that they "felt respected while learning new stuff". So many people are damaged by conventional education systems into believing they have no knowledge and no ability to learn. The failure of the system and the curriculum becomes the failure of the student.

At Kotare we are gloriously free and independent of the conventional assessment models. You do not get a certificate at our workshops; you might get new allies and new ideas and a strengthened sense of collective power. As educators and as people it is a process of mutual liberation, hope and renewal. What more could a teacher want?

EDUCATION & SOCIAL ACTION

Australia/ East Timor

Friendship School Project

LEE NORRIS

THE LAST THREE years have been exciting ones for the Friendship School Project in building links between schools across Australia and Timor-Leste. It all began with Kirsty Sword Gusmao, the First Lady of Timor-Leste, helping to build a partnership between the students of Balibar Primary School and their counterparts at Eaglehawk Primary School in Victoria.

The project is based firmly on the principle of shared learning experiences. Students in both Australia and Timor learn new skills as they work together at their own school and they work to communicate across the distances, the language and intercultural gaps. They do this through action-based learning. The project assists students, teachers and community groups in both countries to build their awareness of the situation faced by their counterparts.

In a number of Australian schools, student committees are given guided responsibility for promoting and managing the linkage with their partner school in Timor-Leste. Many teachers have added Timor-Leste to the school curriculum as an example of a developing democracy. There has been sharing of teaching materials on Timor-Leste, some related teacher workshops, and a start made on a more comprehensive curriculum materials program. In Timor-Leste, project staff encourage students and their teachers to respond to the letters and albums sent by their Australian partners, thus

developing their written communications skills and an awareness of Australia and the broader community. This means that they take pride in their contributions to the project.

Following is a brief summary of some of the project's achievements to date. Students, teachers and school communities can justifiably be proud of their achievements and their contributions over the last three years.

- There are a total of 88 participating schools across Australia, in the Northern Territory, New South Wales, Tasmania, Western Australia and Victoria
- There are now 61 Friendship School Partnerships: Australian schools linked directly to schools in Timor-Leste
- Sports equipment provided for 130 schools in Timor-Leste in 2005
- School supplies and learning materials distributed to 127 schools in Timor-Leste
- Teachers' support and workshops in Timor-Leste have incorporated the school linkages into student learning activities
- Annual Student Forums on Timor-Leste for Australian schools held in 2004 & 2005
- Development of curriculum materials on Timor-Leste for Australian schools
- Distribution of albums, banners and letters to East Timorese and Australian schools
- Development of information kits for Timor-Leste and Australian schools
- An Australian volunteer was appointed in Dili to assist in developing the capacity of the FSP Dili team to plan, coordinate and provide support for schools and students in Timor-Leste.

The project has been able to operate largely through the goodwill of participants and volunteers who give freely of their time, and the generosity of some key donors who have helped fund the project co-ordinator position and provided some operational facilities. There are four major donors: the Australian Education Union, the Victorian Independent Education Union, the Catholic Education Office and the Victorian Department of Education. This partnership is a unique arrangement that crosses the boundaries that often separate these organisations. Here they are united in their endeavours to support students and teachers in a practical way. A Board of Directors manages the Australia East Timor Friendship School Project Limited while the day-to-day operations are guided by the AETFSP Advisory Committee jointly chaired by Kirsty Sword-Gusmao and Terry Bracks.

Both the Board and the Advisory Group have had to examine ways to sustain current programs and respond to good ideas for new activities. The membership scheme that was introduced last year has been a significant step towards meeting the growing costs of running the project.

To ensure that schools in all sectors and all areas can participate, the membership subscription is kept as low as possible. Depending on the extent of their level of involvement in the project, participating Friendship Schools are asked to pay a subscription ranging from $27.50 to $55.00 per year. New member schools are asked to pay a joining fee that also covers the cost of the Friendship School Project

Introductory Kit. Further details are available at **www.aeuvic.asn.au/special/alola.html** or by emailing **fsp@aeuvic.asn.au**.

Two schools that currently have a friendship school partnership are Brunswick North West Primary School and Chatham Primary School.

Brunswick North West Primary School was one of a group of schools that joined the Friendship School Project through a partnership between the FSP and Moreland City Council that became known as the Kids to Kids Project. Seven local schools were part of a pilot project that brought together student leaders for leadership training.

The students gained skills in running meetings, decision making and planning fundraising activities. They met at the Moreland council chambers where the Education Foundation RUMAD project provided training and support. The FSP also linked the participating schools to partner schools in East Timor. The schools jointly raised over $3000, which was matched by the Education Foundation. They then communicated with the District Administrator's Office in the Aileu, one of the 13 districts in Timor Leste and the district that is linked to the City of Moreland.

They were able to send their money to Timor-Leste to provide sports equipment and resources for schools in Aileu. Brunswick North West continues to work with the Friendship School Project and recently sent an album and school banner to its partner school in Aileu.

Chatham Primary School in Balwyn is a school that was introduced to the project when its new principal arrived in 2004. The Grade 6 students were the leaders of this program and, with their teachers, each class prepared some information about Timor-Leste that was presented at a school assembly.

Students and teachers took pride in learning about Timor-Leste and initially collecting school supplies to send to East Timor. As time went on they learnt that it was more effective to raise funds, because by purchasing resources in Timor the money supports local businesses and the economy of East Timor. It also means that the transportation costs can be redirected to the purchase of items that the schools need and that are available locally.

Through this project, Timorese students are developing basic literacy and letter-writing skills and an awareness of the world beyond Timor-Leste through the interest shown by their partner schools in Australia. Australian students are learning that life in a developing country is often maintained without items that they take for granted, such as the Internet and other rapid modern forms of communication, and often without telephones. For many of their counterparts, even electricity and running water would be a novelty. The biggest lesson to be learnt by Australian schools and students is that for the communication with their partner school to occur they need to learn patience and take time to understand and value the albums, drawings and letters that are sent from Timor-Leste.

For Information about the project please contact the FSP project co-ordinator in Australia, Rachel Clark, on **(03) 9418 4807** or email **rachel.clark@aeuvic.asn.au.**

EDUCTION & SOCIAL ACTION

RICHARD ELMORE

ON SUSTAINING SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT, THE ROLE OF LEADERSHIP AND THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN INDIVIDUAL AND COLLECTIVE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT
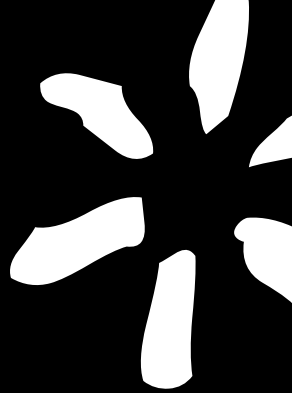
INTERVIEW BY JOHN GRAHAM

THIS IS THE second part of an interview John Graham conducted with Richard Elmore, Professor of Educational Leadership at Harvard University, during his visit to Melbourne as a guest of the Victorian Educational Leadership Consortium, Deakin University and The Victorian Government Department of Education. Professor Elmore's most recent books include: School Reform from the Inside Out (2005), High Schools and High Stakes Testing (2003) and Restructuring the Classroom: Teaching, Learning and School Organization' (1996). Part 3 of the interview will appear in the next edition of *Professional Voice*.

JG: *A process of significant change in a school uses up a lot of a energy from the people involved in it. How do you sustain that energy level?*

RE: What the research says, and what is evident from the work that I do, is that the single strongest motivator of teachers is evidence of students' learning as a consequence of their teaching. There are many other motivators and there are many other sources of motivation in the teacher's environment, but the primary motivator is still whether there's evidence that what

I teach is what students are learning. You need to create conditions in which teachers can feel successful in what they're doing and to reinforce that success, call attention to it and celebrate it individually and collectively.

JG: *What should you do when the improvement process starts to lose momentum?*

RE: There comes a time in every improvement process when people discover that the best they know how to do isn't good enough and the improvement path of the organisation goes flat. These are predictable stages. They happen in every developmental process we've ever studied. Individual development, physical development, development in relationships, development in groups, development in companies, development in economies: all have this characteristic punctuated equilibrium development process.

JG: *Is this where the role of the school leader becomes important?*

RE: The primary function of leaders under that circumstance is to be calm and understanding and to be supportive and to insist that the organisation find whatever the next level of work is to improve their performance. I think people's sense of the difficulty of the work is relative to the stage of development at which they find themselves. They will look you straight in the eye at certain stages of development and tell you that what you're asking them to do is impossible and a year later they will look at you and say: "What we were doing then was the easy part; what we're doing now is the difficult part."

And that's because people tend to measure the difficulty of the task in terms of their capacity to do the task rather than in terms of the inherent difficulty of the task. So it's the leader's job to close the gap between the capacity and the difficulty. The parallel is with students who learn at progressively higher and higher levels of complexity and understanding, so that something that seemed extremely difficult and impossible at one stage seems relatively easy at other stages. People learn to ratchet up their expectations.

But you can see that there's a technical side to this. You actually have to know the knowledge base from which you're drawing the practice that's going to improve the organisation. There's a social emotional side to it, which means you have to develop the affective properties that are necessary to help lead people through this process. There's also a sort of organisational new group dynamic dimension to leadership in which you're paying attention to all of the political factions in the organisation and how the individuals are lining up.

Then I would argue there's a kind of managerial dimension in which it's your job to figure out how to get the

resources and get them in the right places to the right people to make the work happen. But the evidence is that the work is highly motivating if you work on calling attention to the successes that people have.

JG: *A lot has been written recently about the importance of the individual teacher rather than the school as a whole as the crucial element in the improvement process. What is your view about this?*

RE: Well it depends on what problem you're trying to solve. If you're trying to solve the problem of the skill and knowledge of the teaching force, then maybe an individual teacher is the right kind of analysis. If you're trying to solve the opportunity and access of kids to high level academic work in a supportive environment, paying attention to the individual as a unit of analysis reinforces the basic problem in the school system. It doesn't solve the problem. It aggravates the existing problem which is that most of the variability in student performance is produced by differences among teachers within schools rather than between schools. Well that means that students' access to high levels of learning is determined by which teacher they get and I think that's a bad idea.

JG: *Does that mean that schools should concentrate more on the notion of some sort of collective improvement?*

RE: You have to have a bigger organisational unit because kids don't go to school with teachers in private practice. They go to school with teachers who work in an organisation called a school, so that practice setting has to work as an effective setting in order to provide access for all students to high levels of work. I think the research basically says that if you don't solve this issue as a unit of the school, you're in pretty big trouble because you're going to limit some kids' access to high level work.

That's the secret by which the existing system works. It provides some students with access. We can always point to those students. We can always point to certain teachers as exceptionally good teachers. The problem with access is a systemic problem. It has to do with the variability in quality of what students get in schools and you can only solve that at an organisational level.

Now there are problems that are worth solving that have the individual as the unit of analysis. Some component of teacher professional development should always be there to provide some latitude for teachers to pursue their own interests and development as individuals. There's no question about that. Highly motivated people won't stay in a profession that doesn't allow them to develop individually. But I would argue that we don't have much difficulty doing that. In fact all of the motivational mechanisms we've used so far have a fairly high individualistic bias.

JG: What do you think about each teacher having an individual professional development plan?

RE: I think this question is an interesting one. I interpret it as a question about the relationship between the individual and the collective, and I'm a political scientist so that's like the number one question I study and work out.

If this were a sector in which individuals engaged in private practice—so if I showed up at a school and the school was just a building and each teacher had an office and I went in and sat down with a teacher for a period of time and did something called learning, then I looked down at my calendar and discovered I was supposed to go to see practitioner "Z" for another 35 minutes of something called learning—then individual development plans by themselves would make a huge amount of sense, because you want each of those practitioners to engage in disciplined work on their own practice. You'd want to create a professional infrastructure to police that. You'd want to make sure that people didn't get their licences renewed if they didn't engage in certain kinds of professional development and if they didn't have a plan for doing that.

But when you introduce the idea that learning occurs at organisations called schools, not in private practice, you introduce another layer of complexity. It's not an argument about whether a teacher should have an individual professional development plan; it's an argument about what should be the content of those plans, what should be the relationship between those plans and the overall strategy of the organisation in which they work.

And it's at that point that it starts to get complicated, because individual planning within an organisation which requires a strong normative environment to do its work is a centrifugal force. So what you would think would be a natural contribution to the development of human capital in the organisation actually atomises the organisation. It may make some teachers more effective practitioners within that organisation. It is not necessarily going to make the organisation more effective.

So it's a long-winded response to the question but I think individual professional development plans, in the absence of some understanding or theory about how they connect to the collective enterprise, are just another centrifugal force in the organisation and I don't think the people who are advocating these policies are really aware of that. Maybe they view it as a kind of professionalising idea and they're not thinking about the consequences of it.

JG: You have written about how the individual teacher needs to be aware of the next knowledge step they need to take. So that in itself would differ between individuals within the same school, wouldn't it?

INTERVIEW: JOHN GRAHAM

ON SUSTAINING SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT, THE ROLE OF LEADERSHIP AND THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN INDIVIDUAL AND COLLECTIVE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

RE: Sure. Just like it would differ for any school within a system. There's always a differential treatment problem buried in an overall systemic improvement strategy. But the metaphor I use is performance and quality on the vertical and time on the horizontal; improvement is moving the whole herd roughly north-east. And sometimes it's like herding cats or herding chickens, they're all over the place and they're doing all kinds of idiosyncratic things but you want the general movement to be in a given direction, and that does require persistently asking for every teacher: "What is the next level of work for this teacher?" But you hope that the aggregate of that is a general movement up that improvement curve.

We have seen some pretty dramatic transformations of schools just by the administrators at the systems level and at the school level saying:

"There's a pile of money available here for people who want to engage in individual and collective development related to key problems in practice in the organisation. There are four or five ways we can get knowledge to work on this problem. You can choose which of these options you want to get involved in, but if you do it you have an obligation to come back and teach us what you learn and help us understand what the relevance is of that body of knowledge and those practices to this problem we're working on."

What it does is harness the individual's sense of growth in the organisation to the collective enterprise. The evidence is that teachers really respond to that. They like the fact that they can come back and teach their peers something that their peers didn't necessarily know.

ASSESSMENT & REPORTING

NOTES ON contributors

GILBERT BURGH studied and taught in the philosophy department at the University of Queensland. He has also held teaching and research positions in the faculty of education, and the Key Centre of ethics, law, justice and governance at Griffith University. Dr Burgh was president of the Federation of Australasian Philosophy for Schools Associations, 2001-03, and is active in the promotion of philosophical inquiry in schools. He currently teaches ethics and philosophy at Arts Ipswich, UQ. He is co-author of *Engaging with Ethics* (Social Sciences Press, 2000) and *Ethics and the Community of Inquiry: Education for deliberative democracy* (Thomson, 2006), and has published papers on democratic theory and practice, and philosophy in education.

CATHERINE DELAHUNTY is co-ordinator of the education programme at Kotare Trust Research and Education for Social Change. She has been an activist in education issues, environmental issues, land rights, poverty issues and green politics since she was 15; she is now 53. She has been a tutor, community mediator, facilitator and organiser in a range of rural and urban environments in Aotearoa/ New Zealand. Her qualifications as a social change educator are based on these experiences. She lives in Turanga nui a Kiwa (east coast of the north island) and travels throughout the country, learning something new every day.

RICHARD ELMORE is Professor of Educational Leadership in the Graduate School of Education at Harvard University. He is director of the Consortium for Policy Research in Education (CPRE), a group of American universities engaged in research on state and local education policy. His research focuses on the effects of federal, state, and local education policy on schools and classrooms. He is

currently exploring how schools of different types and in different policy contexts develop a sense of accountability and a capacity to deliver high quality instruction. He has also researched educational choice, school restructuring, and how changes in teaching and learning affect school organisation. His most recent book is *School Reform from the Inside Out* (2005).

MEGAN FOX was the first transition broker at Whittlesea Youth Commitment and in fact Australia. She now works with TAFE students as a case worker for Managed Individual Pathways as senior MIPs officer in the Youth Unit at North Melbourne Institute of Technology.

JOHN GRAHAM is a research officer at the Australian Education Union (Victorian branch), with responsibility for researching curriculum and professional developments in education and training. He has written extensively about curriculum change, teachers and teaching as a profession, developments in education at an institutional, state and federal level, and on a range of other matters from funding to organisational review. John has been a teacher in Victorian government secondary schools, a researcher and writer for a national equity program, and a project manager and policy developer for the Department of Education.

THE INSTITUTE OF KOORIE EDUCATION grew out of Deakin University's decision in 1986 to offer programs for Koorie students, based on a principle of joint management and partnership with the Victorian Koorie community. Programs are off-campus and community based to promote access and equity for Indigenous Australians. Courses and teaching styles are customised for students and incorporate Koorie cultural knowledge and perspectives. The author of this article requested it be published under the institute's byline: "We are not owners of this knowledge. We continue to be taught by the community."

DAVID KERIN has been an activist and self-styled troublemaker in social change, unionism and green movements since the 1960s. In a varied career, he has worked in the building and rail industries and taught community development and youth studies at Broadmeadows TAFE and Victoria University. He has been a member of the Builders and Labourers Federation through two deregistrations and activist in peace movements. Dave was a founding member of Earth Worker. He is currently co-ordinator of Union Solidarity, an organisation set up to bring together workers across unions and fight for union rights at the workplace gate.

LEE NORRIS joined the Friendship School Project as a volunteer in April 2003, coordinating the project and establishing the FSP Advisory Committee in Australia, and assisting with the pilot in Timor Leste. Once the AETFSP company was registered, Lee was employed as its national coordinator in Australia. Lee previously worked as a researcher, developer and manager of workplace training and skills programs for 17 years, specialising in the integration of ESL and literacy into mainstream programs for manufacturing employees in Victoria. She worked with AMES for 12 years. and then as private consultant. She retired in September 2006 but maintains an interest in FSP.

BOB PETERSON is a teacher, writer, and organiser. He teaches fifth grade in an anti-racist, bilingual public school in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, USA. He is a founding editor of *Rethinking Schools*, a US-based magazine that advocates for social justice and innovative school reform. Bob has co-edited several books including: *Transforming Teacher Unions: Fighting for better schools and social justice; Rethinking Mathematics: Teaching social justice by the numbers; and Rethinking Globalization: Teaching for justice in an unjust world*. He serves on the executive board of the Milwaukee Teachers Education Association. For more information about Rethinking Schools visit **www.rethinkingschools.org**. To contact Bob: **repmilw@aol.com**.

RACHEL POWER is a journalist with the Australian Education Union (Victorian branch). She is also a freelance writer and illustrator, and co-production editor of *Arena Magazine*. Rachel has worked as a researcher for the Arts & Entertainment Management program at Deakin University, and spent six years as a reporter for *The Canberra Times*. She has published one book, *Alison Rehfisch: A life for art* (The Beagle Press, 2002).

ANN TAYLOR is the branch deputy president of the Australian Education Union (Victorian branch). She was formerly the assistant principal at Moonee Ponds West Primary School.

CALL FOR PAPERS

PV is calling for papers based on the theme of **Behaviour Management** (May 07). Papers should be no more than 2000 words. please contact Nic Barnard on Ph **03 9418 4811** or email **nic.barnard@aeuvic.asn.au** for further information. Papers should be submitted by **26 March 2007**.

EDUCTION & SOCIAL ACTION

TAX INVOICE

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Professional Voice is published tri-annually and aims to stimulate debate within the Australian education community. Covering issues of curriculum, pedagogy, leadership, educational practices and related topics, *Professional Voice* is positioned to build awareness of innovation, best practice and reform within educational settings ranging from early childhood, primary and secondary schools, as well as TAFE, adult provision and disability centres. *Professional Voice* is funded by the Australian Education Union Victorian Branch and is available free to financial members.

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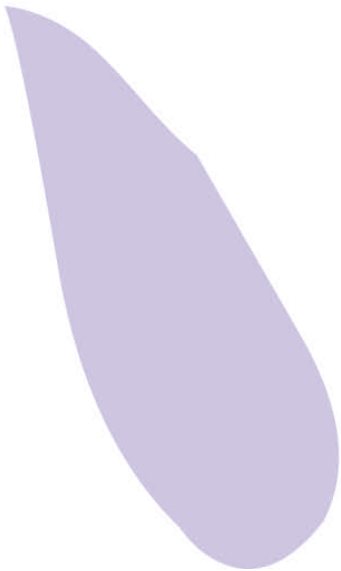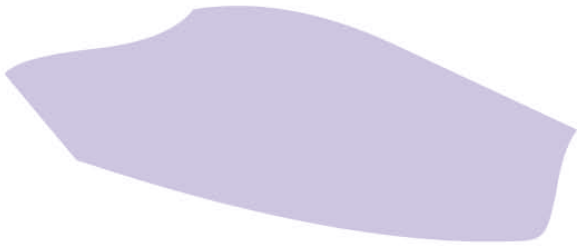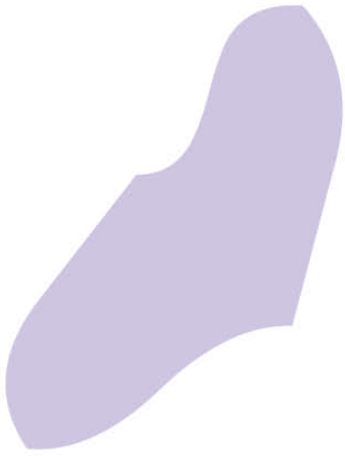
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