

# Professional Educator

VOLUME 1 : NUMBER 1 : OCTOBER 2002



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#### EDITORIAL

Educators across schools and the further and higher education sectors are addressing rapid change and providing for new, complex and varied learning needs. So it's important that we find room for debate, for educational practitioners and researchers to engage in the conversations that make the educational enterprise truly collaborative. *Professional Educator* aims to bring that professional discourse to you, to help build a 'learning profession' through the development of data-driven and evidence-based approaches to learning and teaching. *Professional Educator* aims to be a powerful resource – by educators, for educators – that supports, challenges and extends those working in the diverse range of education and training environments Australia-wide. You'll find educators talking together in these pages. Our aim? To incorporate the views of all those in the profession, to evolve to meet your changing needs. Let us know what you think and what you want. Much that appears in the public and professional arena in the name of education comes from outside the profession, while the wealth of research and the work and conversations of educators that might be happening locally or in

specialist arenas remains hidden. *Professional Educator* makes the findings and outcomes of contemporary research readily accessible, explores how professional educators are interpreting, applying and value-adding to such research, and provides support to enable educators to enhance their professional practice. *Professional Educator* bridges the divide between theory and practice – in ways that not only acknowledge and value the work of educators, but also assist in transforming the profession to respond more effectively to contemporary needs. You'll read about it here. Try professional standards: what's the current picture and what do professional educators say? Try lifelong, lifewide learning: what are the emerging needs for teachers, and which traditional educational matters continue to concern educators in the classroom? Information and communication technologies, online, off-campus learning, middle schooling, education and the law: what's the state of play for Australian school education and further education? You'll find out in *Professional Educator*.

Published by the Australian College of Educators, October 2002  
ISSN 1447-3607

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Australian College of Educators  
James Darling House  
42 Geils Court, DEAKIN ACT 2600  
Phone: (02) 6281 1677  
Fax: (02) 6285 1262  
Email: [ace@austcolled.com.au](mailto:ace@austcolled.com.au)  
Website: [www.austcolled.com.au](http://www.austcolled.com.au)  
Print Post Approved PP255003/02630  
ABN: 96 562 879 327

Editor Dr Steve Holden  
Advisory Committee  
Prof Geoff Masters, ACER  
Dr Tom Karmel, NCVER  
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Mr Peter Cole, Education Consultant

ACE Contacts  
Advertising: Janaki de Silva  
Editorial: Kaye Livingstone  
Design: Art Graphic Design, ACT  
Printing: Union Offset Printers

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## Opinion

Earlier this year we presented the prototype *Professional Educator*. Here are some of your responses.

'The summary of the national perspective is extremely worthwhile.'

'A regular feature about legal issues and teaching would be valuable.'

'It will provide up-to-date commentary and analysis of current research and emerging professional matters.'

'It must always make strong links to classroom practice.'

'The challenge is to strike a balance between national and international research and cover all sectors.'

'Professional Educator mustn't replicate what is available in other magazines.'

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# Teacher professionalism and the new 'Gradgrindery'

## What's happening with standards?

**Terry Hayes** examines the business of professional standard building and the dangers of an implied deficit model of teachers and teaching, and suspects the new Gradgrinds will be bureaucracies eager to fill teachers, not with facts, but with 'innovation' and 'creativity.' Teachers need to be involved when governments get to the sharp end: establishing criteria to set up professional teaching authorities.

*'Where are the teachers?' It's a familiar tale in almost any enquiry about the teaching profession. At the highest level of recommendation, teachers are to be the objects of enquiry rather than equal participants in the enquiry.*

The last four years have seen a flurry of professional standards activity following on from the publication of the Senate Inquiry into Teaching report, *Teaching is a Class Act*, with three major Australian Research Council projects undertaken by national subject associations investigating subject-specific standards in Mathematics, Science and English literacy (STELLA), and considerable cross-fertilisation between these projects. A Commonwealth-funded project has investigated information and communication technology standards for teachers, as well as work in Western Australia on leading teacher competencies.

Running parallel with these developments has been the work of the Australian College of Educators in positioning itself as a self-styled honest broker in the debate, with conferences, a passing parade of United States celebrities from the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS), summits and discussion papers. Now, at the end of this cycle, we seem to be moving into a more hard-edged scenario as various state governments legislate to set up professional teaching bodies with varying degrees of independence and powers of regulation and control ceded to the profession. The immediate hope is that such bodies do not proceed to reinvent the wheel in establishing their own professional standards frameworks but draw on the accumulated wisdom of the profession as it manifested itself in the aforesaid projects and strategies.

We are also starting to see action at the federal level building on the support provided by the Commonwealth under the



Quality Teaching Program to facilitate the work of some of the above projects. We have a new Ministerial Council of Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs (MCEETYA) Task Force on Teacher Quality and Educational Leadership charged with developing a national standards framework and a recently announced Department of Education, Science and Training Ministerial Review of Teaching and Teacher Education.

That review is as good a starting point as any to ask, 'Where to next for the professional standards agenda?' Both the composition of the review committee and the terms of enquiry suggest that bureaucracies and governments still have something to learn about teacher professionalism. The committee is made up of worthy personages – academics, teacher educators, principals – but one feels a bit like Basil Fawlty digging in the soufflé for the duck and asking, 'Where are the teachers?' It's a familiar tale in almost any enquiry about the teaching profession. At the highest level of

recommendation, teachers are to be the objects of enquiry rather than equal participants in the enquiry. Similarly with the terms of reference for the review. Implicit in them is a sense of a profession in crisis, both in terms of declining numbers, particularly in some disciplines, and in terms of a profession that is stale, out of touch and in need of rejuvenating and transformation. While 'crisis' might be an apt term for describing the future supply and demand for teachers, especially in Mathematics, Science and Technology, the assumptions about the current state of the *actual* professional life of the profession need challenging. The phrasing of terms of reference 3 and 4 essentially offers a deficit model of the professional knowledge of teachers – what teachers currently believe, know and do. The emphasis falls consistently on getting with the new, the innovative, the creative. For example, the 4th term of reference – 'Map current skills and propose strategies...to create an innovative learning

culture' – implies an unfortunate dichotomy with the potential to pit 'current skills' against future innovation. There is little sense of a continuum between present and future practice in the context of what teachers' currently believe, know and do *and* what they think they might need to change and adapt in the light of their professional responsibilities as reflective practitioners.

I might sound a little sceptical, even paranoid, here, but I am after all a Victorian. In that state the profession is currently being bombarded by the latest bureaucratic mantra of innovation and creativity – that of 'The Thinking Curriculum' – a mantra which is both ahistorical and anti-intellectual in its ignorance of the rigorous thinking associated with traditional subject disciplines. A bit of cobbled together de Bono and Howard Gardner and a revisit of Bloom's taxonomy does not a thinking curriculum make. Socrates, after all, was doing quite a bit of thinking before 'The Thinking Curriculum' was 'badged' and marketed. Associated with it is a rather aggressive expectation that teachers will have to change their ways. Overall it smacks of a new kind of Gradgrindery, only in this case it's the teachers, and not the students, who are the vessels waiting to be filled, not with facts, but with 'innovation' and 'creativity.' In the face of it, teachers may well have to affirm the Sissy Jupes in all of them and insist that their experiential awareness – their professional knowledge – counts for something in any introduction of new pedagogies.

My experiences both as a member of the STELLA project and as a member of the Ministerial Committee that drafted the report recommending the terms for the establishment of the Victorian Institute of Teaching (VIT) have inevitably coloured my above remarks and are the context for what I now say about certain principles or understandings that should underpin any future professional standards agenda. First, most teachers think of

themselves, and behave, as professionals in their commitment to reflexive practice, to their own lifelong learning and to collaborative learning communities. I was reminded of this a couple of Saturdays ago when I was part of a Victorian Association for the Teaching of English team that ran a professional development day for teachers from several schools in the Portland area. It was a day that made me feel good about the profession. Many of the teachers were in their late forties and early fifties with years of teaching experience between them, but there were young ones as well. They were certainly interested in the 'good oil' about new texts and the teaching strategies the team brought with them, but they were also interested in discussing new curriculum configurations and responses to the government's testing and assessment regime. In other words, they were interested in the full range of collaborative professional discussions; in being spoken with, rather than spoken to or at. As teachers in rural Victoria, they were all too aware of what little chance they get to engage in discussions with other members

of the profession, other than those in their immediate school context.

Second, teachers want their professional knowledge taken into account when professional standards are articulated, developed and implemented. They are not interested in tablets of stone from on high, and the more grass-roots the process is for developing and articulating standards, the more comfortable with and accepting of them teachers will be. Most current statements of standards inevitably involve a distillation of a comprehensive range of possibilities into a few abstract statements around principles of professional knowledge, professional action and professional engagement. The collaborative work between the three ARC subject-specific projects came to recognise that, when it came to abstract principles, there was little difference between them. The subject specificity was in the contextualising and articulating of the details that demonstrated how such standards were understood and achieved as they applied to the different subject disciplines. The methodology of the STELLA project, which

*'Now what I want is, Facts. Teach these boys and girls nothing but Facts. Facts alone are wanted in life... You can only form the minds of reasoning animals upon Facts: nothing else will be of any service to them... Stick to Facts, sir.'*  
So speaks Thomas Gradgrind on 'the one thing needful' in Charles Dickens's *Hard Times: the kind of 'galvanising apparatus' needed to influence contemporary teachers?*

### Professional standards: What do practising educators say?

**Ross Nicholas, Principal, Nowa Nowa Primary School, Victoria.**

Everyone's waiting to see how professional standards are going to tie with career progression and what impact they might have on salary in terms of incentives. At the moment, however, most teachers wouldn't see professional standards as any barrier because it's likely they'll already meet the standards. The real question is, what shape will professional standards ultimately take? In Victoria, we already have professional standards in place through the Department of Education and Training that indicate criteria for educators at various stages in their career. The next question is, how different can any professional standards be from these? That's something that the Victorian Institute of Teaching will obviously be looking at.

Whatever shape they take, it's essential that professional standards will recognise the current skills of teaching professionals. The teachers I know and work with are very hardworking and professional people who are already engaged in their own professional development. The questions they'll be asking might be in terms of any PD issues that flow on from standards in terms of the further competence they might want to acquire: is it relevant PD; is it worthwhile; will it improve teaching and learning? The real chestnut, however, is always going to be to do with time, because schools are already very busy places. Will the assessment of teachers' professional standards soak up excessive time? If standards propel educators to pursue further PD, when is that PD supposed to take place? Teachers are already working pretty hard as it is, taking a lot of work home, planning, marking, and so on. There are a lot of things teachers do now in schools – and out of school – that perhaps they didn't do ten years ago. Teaching workload has exploded in the last four or so years. Teachers are also dealing with some rapid changes in the way children operate, partly as a result of the multimedia experiences many children are now exposed to, in and out of schools. So things are changing pretty fast. It's important that professional standards – whatever shape they take and whichever organisations are involved in determining them or acting as gatekeepers in terms of career steps – recognise the enormous amount of activity educators are already dealing with.

*The evidence and research is certainly there to suggest that high standards for highly accomplished teachers can be set and achieved against a rigorous assessment procedure. The question, however, is whether the Australian education culture, notwithstanding the Western Australian experience, will buy the model. My own feeling is that, given the collaborative communal nature of the teaching profession, probably not.*

focused on teachers writing and discussing narratives about tangible, empirical moments of significance in their teaching, demonstrated also that context is everything when it comes to showing the variety of ways in which standards can be achieved. The methodology also showed the importance of a collaborative community for talking one's way into knowledge of the standards – of what they might be and how they might be realised.

Third, teachers want assessment against professional standards to be a meaningful contribution to their professional lives. They want a professional development framework that is more developmental than regulatory. They do not want to have to demonstrate their professionalism by jumping through a series of meaningless administrative hoops or by a ticking off a series of checklist criteria. One of the concerns expressed by teachers who participated in forums on the VIT was that they do not want the Institute to be characterised as a 'standards enforcer,' while recognising that

quality assurance about professional standards is one of the Institute's prime functions. It will take a delicate balancing act of professional advocacy on the part of the VIT to ensure the profession that it can deliver on the latter without becoming the former.

Finally I want to say something about professional standards as they apply to the certification of highly accomplished teachers and the induction of beginning teachers into the profession. Certification of the former has been part of the conversation for the past four years in the focus of the ARC Science project and the increasing familiarity of Australian educators with the processes of the NBPTS. The evidence and research is certainly there to suggest that high standards for highly accomplished teachers can be set and achieved against a rigorous assessment procedure. The question, however, is whether the Australian education culture, notwithstanding the Western Australian experience, will buy the model. My own

feeling is that, given the collaborative, communal nature of the teaching profession, probably not. Others see it differently.

The issue with beginning teachers is the need to have mechanisms in place which quickly recognise them as valued members of the profession. The VIT forums, where members of Council have been talking up the value of the Institute in giving teacher professionalism some recognition and, more importantly, some clout, have been received most enthusiastically by nearly-qualified teaching graduates. They are doing so in the knowledge that their registration as teachers will be provisional and that they will have to undergo induction and mentoring programs before they are eligible for full registration. Meeting standards, and standards demonstrated in actually practising the profession, will be involved. But, I think there is a concomitant recognition that current members of the profession have to give beginning teachers, by virtue of the fact that, as new graduates, they are closer to the source of the changing dynamics of pedagogical and curriculum knowledge. Beginning teachers are not empty vessels either, waiting to be filled by Grandgrindean helpings of our wiser experience. They, too, have an experiential sense of what it might mean – embryonic and theoretical as that might be – to be teaching. That, too, has to be taken into account in the relationship they evince with the professional learning communities in which they find themselves. They are potentially a great source of discipline renewal for the rest of us, a fact that any worthwhile induction or mentoring program ought to recognise.

Ultimately, too, we expect beginning teachers to demonstrate their professionalism from day one on the job. That, in turn, has implications for how they are asked to think about themselves as professionals in their pre-service education. This point was brought home quite forcibly to me by a couple of incidents that

occurred during my work for the Ministerial Committee. One was the remark of a deputy principal from a primary school in rural Victoria whom I met during a VIT consultation. He thought not only that all primary school teachers should be taught about the government's Early Years literacy program, but that the pre-service education course should be skewed to teaching how to implement the program as well. The other was a remark of Carol Adams, the Chief Executive Officer of the General Teaching Council in England at a seminar held in Melbourne where she talked about the prospect of pre-service teachers being awarded provisional registration with the Council. This assumes they are already on their way to being fully-fledged members of a profession capable of regulating itself in the cause of the public good.

There is, I think, an implicit tension in these points of view, and the tension has to do with the image of the teacher. The former expects the teacher to be a dutiful technocrat whose worth is measured basically by their ability to implement government policy. The other expects the teacher to be a professional in the best sense of the word, that is, an educator who is capable of critique and reflection, and implementation and innovation based upon those capabilities. This is a professionalism based not upon dutifulness to a particular government or system or dictum or strategy, but upon the exercise of one's professional knowledge and judgment. It is the kind of choice Chris Woodhead posed in his address to the Curriculum Corporation Conference in 2000. As befitted Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools at the time he naturally opted for the former and had some problems with an alternative vision of the teaching profession as 'a community of enquiry' dedicated to the pursuit of 'holistic problematised pedagogies.' Yet the establishment of the VIT and the work of the STELLA project were precisely about the latter: to do with the establishment of professional learning communi-

## Professional standards: What do practising educators say?

**Carolyn Clancy, Leading Teacher and Year Two classroom teacher at Cambridge Primary School, Hoppers Crossing, Victoria.**

Teaching is a highly skilled profession. Its complexities are not always fully understood or recognised and appreciated by others outside our profession. By developing professional standards we have an opportunity to articulate what it is that we do, giving us, at long last, the chance to destroy myths around teaching – like the myth that anyone can teach. For us as teachers to achieve professional recognition, public support and higher status in the eyes of the community we do need to have appropriate standards, but 'appropriate standards' mean standards developed by all the profession through extensive consultation and debate.

We have in recent years had 'standards' or 'criteria' imposed on us by our employers, used in an annual review process attached to progress through an incremental pay scale. Teachers had no ownership of them and at times found it difficult to see their relevance to what they were doing in their everyday work with students. Some of the standards appeared to focus on leadership, managerial and administration skills, when not all teachers strive for leadership positions. Our standards need to relate to the knowledge and skills teachers demonstrate in providing relevant and meaningful learning opportunities and experiences for their students. This is after all the very core of why we teach. As teachers we should have acknowledgement of our professional growth, and the wealth of knowledge and skills that we develop as we progress throughout our career. Therefore we should have incentives in our salaries acknowledging this growth and it should be available to all teachers. We have to be extremely careful that this is not achieved in a competitive way. Teaching for me is a team approach. It involves the sharing of ideas, resources, knowledge and assistance. We cannot function in a vacuum and we need to value our colleagues as part of a larger learning community. This means not just our colleagues in our immediate school but as a whole profession. Leadership standards also need to be developed, but again through consultation and open debate with the profession. But leadership standards should not be imposed on teachers who do not wish to pursue this in their career.

How we assess the standards needs to be developed at the same time. Some of the assessment that has gone on in recent years through review processes has been varied and inconsistent. The assessment process should not be onerous, nor should it take away large amounts of our precious time that we could be utilising in our teaching. It needs to be fair and transparent. It should be seen in a positive light, as a way to maintain and further develop as a teacher with constructive feedback. A team approach should be taken rather than leaving assessment to the principal class. The process itself should be seen as a part of professional growth through peer mentoring and peer support to assist in the achievement of the standards.

Professional development is essential for professional growth, but we shouldn't take a narrow view of what that is. It should include the varied types of PD teachers do everyday that are not always acknowledged: professional reading; peer-support and mentoring; the reflections and discussions that occur constantly with each other when teachers grapple with issues, problems, programs for various students with particular needs. A great deal is learned from each other and it doesn't have to be achieved in formal ways such as a PD presentation or course. Linking PD with the standards provides relevant and purposeful ways for teachers not only to achieve them, but to gain a clear understanding of what they mean. It also puts some onus on employers to resource PD adequately and to provide fair and equitable access for their staff. This is particularly important for teachers in rural areas. Teachers already give up a great deal of their time and money to attend PD: this should be acknowledged. Greater opportunities have to be provided by employers for PD in school hours.

### Links

[www.austcolled.com.au](http://www.austcolled.com.au)

[www.dest.gov.au/schools/publications/2002/RaisingtheStandards/RaisingtheStandards.pdf](http://www.dest.gov.au/schools/publications/2002/RaisingtheStandards/RaisingtheStandards.pdf)

### Publications

Australian College of Educators. (2002) Report of a National Meeting of Professional Educators. Canberra: ACE.  
Ingvarson, Lawrence. (2002) Building a Learning Profession. Commissioned Research Series 1. Canberra: ACE.

Terry Hayes is the Extension Education Officer for the Joint Council of Subject Associations of Victoria (JCSAV) and the Past-president of the Australian Association for the Teaching of English (AATE).

ties in which teachers enquire and problematise and, in the process, assert the primacy of their professional knowledge in establishing standards for the profession. The fact that, in their different ways, both projects include the pre-service teaching cohort in their concepts of community would indicate that, as far as pre-service education goes, the sooner prospective teachers are initiated into the ideal of the teacher as reflective practitioner, who expects to be held to account to professional standards they have helped shape, the better – for themselves and for the profession.



# Behaviour management

## A no-frills approach

**Christine Richmond explains how a balanced approach to behaviour management aims to provide teachers and students with more time for the curriculum and less on correcting unwanted behaviour.**

*The skills of effective behaviour management involve a few very simple ideas.*

Managing the behaviour of students effectively in the inclusive classes of today is a demanding business. Most teachers are relentlessly challenged by the task of managing well. Ask almost anybody teaching today and their conversations turn to difficulties associated with managing the behaviour of troubled or troublesome students.

When a teacher is a true expert in this area, it is not immediately obvious, in fact behaviour management is almost invisible. The invitation to see these talented – and often charismatic – teachers as ‘not having to manage’ is attractive. However, should such a teacher move on to another class, especially in another school, even he or she has to go back to basics and get strategic again. The mutual

respect intentionally built by these talented teachers is not transportable across settings. By observing brilliant teachers in action it is attractive to believe that the key to engaging students with the curriculum is not to spend any time managing. This is not so, we all influence each other through our communications. Behaviour management is just one of the genres of communications that teachers employ in their complex work.

Some academics criticise behaviour management as reductionist and over-controlling; advocating that if teachers understand the complexities of student lives, their divergent social contexts, and negotiate a relevant curriculum, problematic behaviour will not be the issue it is. There is no doubt that these are essential tasks of contemporary teachers. However, at the chalkface, even those who intimately appreciate the nuances and implications of their students’ lives and cater for individual learning differences, nevertheless have difficulty engaging some young people in respectful opening gambits of social interaction, let alone in useful curriculum negotiations.

Teachers can make enormous differences by working from the notion that the ‘doing’ component of management is a higher-level communication craft. By planning for and intentionally practising this craft teachers can incrementally reduce the net amount of behaviour management interaction with students, resulting in more curriculum time. The skills of effective behaviour management involve a few very simple ideas. Just because these ideas are simple, however, does not make them easy to implement. Good behaviour management is often

exactly counter to the emotional impetus inherent in a particular situation. When students disrupt, for example, teachers are logically invited to correct. This practice if used in isolation almost inevitably leads to a disruption-correction cycle resulting in frustrations associated with growing student hostility on the one hand and teacher stress on the other.

It is fundamental that teachers approach all management interactions in a calm manner, no matter how frustrating these are in the heat of the moment. This takes much practice but becomes easier over time – and we all do it differently. Taking three deep breaths whenever I feel challenged in the classroom gives me room to step away from using strategies driven by emotional reaction and allows me to regain self-control and remember my planned (and rehearsed) response. It is important that teachers save the bulk of their time, passion and energy for curriculum-focused conversations rather than squandering these precious commodities on managing the behaviour of students.

There are three commonly accepted approaches to effective behaviour management communication. These different types of approaches in the literature range on a continuum of the ‘control-over’ applied behaviour analysis types such as Assertive Discipline (Canter and Canter 1976) to the ‘self-control’ constructive styles of Glasser (1990). The problem with behaviour management is not associated with the particular approach used as much as with an over-reliance on correcting misbehaviour to the exclusion of other types of management interactions.

My Balance Model, a minimalist, no-frills approach, comprises three subsets of behaviour management communications, according to the languages of:

- expectation
- acknowledgment, and
- correction.

The language of expectation is made up of all the things that teachers say and do to teach students about the boundaries of acceptable behaviour in the classroom. The languages of acknowledgment and correction describe how teachers notice and reinforce acceptable behaviour, and correct disruptive behaviour respectively.

Particular skills in each of the three subsets will vary according to the type of approach that an individual teacher prefers to use. For example, a teacher who is attracted to a ‘control-over’ approach is likely to impose a few (positively stated) rules as a central tenet of their language of expectation. A teacher who prefers a ‘self-control’ approach might prefer to generate consensual agreements about social behaviour through class discussion. The issue about how expectations are established is less important than the fact that they are established. I have worked with countless numbers of teachers, particularly in the secondary sector, who explain their lack of emphasis on the language of expectation by stating that students ‘should know by now.’ However, even adults in any new workplace or other social environment take time to learn the boundaries of acceptable behaviour peculiar to that milieu and tend to look for overt cues. The language of acknowledgment is under-utilised for two good reasons. Firstly, it is difficult to notice students when they are engaged in curriculum activities. The logical response here is to take this behaviour for granted. Unfortunately even our most intimate relationships suffer when we fail to overtly appreciate effort. The second reason has to do with cultural reluctance together with psychological ramifications of moment-by-moment interactions in the classroom. It can feel uncomfortable to notice and

overtly encourage co-operative behaviour, particularly if a teacher has not experienced much positive feedback about his or her own efforts. If you’re unsure of the powerful influence on acknowledgment on co-operation within a relationship, when you go home give the first person you see a few acknowledging statements and note what happens. Alternatively you could try giving the same person a few corrective statements and note the response.

Unfortunately, most of us experience much more corrective feedback in our domestic and work-lives compared with acknowledgment. Furthermore, it is logical to notice and want to stop problematic behaviour. In the absence of adequate preparation in behaviour management theory and practice, teachers inevitably, if inadvertently, contribute to classroom problems by over-relying on correction and providing parsimonious acknowledgment, or no acknowledgment at all. This is a traditional approach that no longer influences students to connect successfully with the curriculum – if it ever did. Retaining most students until Year Twelve puts enormous pressure on teachers to manage reluctant students effectively enough to teach well.

Noticing and providing overt encouragement to students when they are co-operating is the key to providing balanced feedback particularly with those who have little intrinsic motivation to engage with the curriculum because of histories of academic failure and social disengagement. These students typically experience overwhelming amounts of correction and many have given up on curriculum engagement by the time they are in secondary school. They frequently spend their energies in off-task behaviours, not only compounding existing learning problems, but also interrupting others, thereby attracting more correction. These disenfranchised students tend to believe that teachers ‘hate’ them. This dangerous nexus has to be subverted if teachers want to reach such students.

### From the chalkface

**Rosemary Torbay**

I entered my first classroom to find the minute-to-minute management of student behaviour extremely challenging. Within days I concluded that there were two possible attitudes I could take. I could wait and see if things would improve, or I could self-manage the situation immediately and increase the control I had over my responses to and actions in this new environment.

Having completed an undergraduate unit in behaviour management with Christine Richmond, I was equipped to implement her innovative model of behaviour management and soon became aware of my strengths and weaknesses. The model acknowledges that behaviour communicates information about needs, and that language is an important factor in behaviour management. The attitude a teacher brings with her to the classroom will determine her level of commitment to this model and its success. My commitment to the model has assisted in continual re-focusing and the re-establishment of the classroom climate and has eliminated the need for inconsistent, once-off behaviour management strategies. It’s been a process over time with an aim to increase the amount of time students actively engage in the curriculum.

*Rosemary Torbay graduated from the University of New England in 2001 with a Bachelor of Education (Primary) and the Faculty Medal. She teaches at Armidale City Public School, NSW.*

Recognition of even the smallest approximations of curriculum engagement conveys a sense of caring and encourages the development of hope. Reducing correction to this group of students is not ‘weak’; it is a key to curbing the destructive dynamic of their experience of relationships with teachers. It’s much easier to accept the invitation to correct such students, leading to more and more alienation.

Until teachers as a group commit to relinquishing traditional notions of the efficacy of punishment to control student behaviour and grasp the keys to planning for and practising more effective ways to influence students, they will remain caught in a cycle of destructive interpersonal relationships with reluctant students. Curriculum materials available to teachers now are so exciting that it is a pity that more time and energy is not made available for classroom exploration. Let us all give away the notions of what appears psychologically inevitable and apparently fair from a law and order perspective, and rehearse alternative and more socially just ways of relating. We’ll all become more charismatic and influential, and have more fun with students.

*Even those who intimately appreciate the nuances and implications of their students’ lives and cater for individual learning differences, nevertheless have difficulty engaging some young people in respectful opening gambits of social interaction, let alone in useful curriculum negotiations.*

*Dr Christine Richmond lectures in behaviour management at the University of New England and is the Australian Council for Educational Leadership (NSW) Travelling Scholar for 2003. Contact crichmon@pobox.une.edu.au/*



# Preparing educators for the Twenty-first Century

Mary Kalantzis and Andrew Harvey outline the current and emerging needs of educators and consider how teacher training institutions and other organisations are meeting them.

## Nearly qualified: what are the concerns of our newest teachers?

Sophie Harris, University of South Australia.

In four years of university education, I've encountered no direct instruction relating to strategies dealing with how to manage behaviour. I'm concerned with how to cater for students who don't possess the cultural capital that appears to be a prerequisite for being successful at school. It's possible to move away from deficit discourses, but in terms of truly empowering these students, I feel I lack the know-how. PD is of extreme importance to acquire practical ideas for teaching in the classroom. I'm concerned with how to teach for social justice, given the fact that it's often a struggle simply to get through a standard day. I don't see myself entering the Australian education system: the demands on teachers in Australia are too great.

Danielle Grieve, University of Tasmania.

A concern that I have as a beginning teacher is knowing how to deal with difficult or distressed parents and making sure they are fully informed in regard to their child's development. My concerns in the area of behaviour management stem largely from trying to be consistent from child to child, while still taking into account the individual family influences that contribute to each child's behaviour. It's important that students utilise computers in the classroom. While it's easy to use computers for extension work or for 'fast finishers,' it's a lot more difficult to set up routines so that all children are given opportunities to gain access to computers and to explore the many possibilities that computers provide. PD is critical in my first year to allow me to expand my repertoire of expertise and to gain knowledge and understanding about programs and teaching strategies: life-long learners need to be adaptable and willing to try new things. Despite these concerns, I look forward to the challenges I face next year as I begin my journey into teaching.

Lifelong learning and lifewide learning have led to new perceptions about the role of educators. Lifelong learning recognises that education does not end – or begin – at school. This is evident from the mobility of today's workforce, the demands for continuous upskilling, and the fact that many vocations of the near future have yet to be visualised. While educators of the future will still be considered providers of knowledge, their role will diversify and expand well beyond this.

Lifewide learning recognises that learning will occur not only throughout but across lives, that the school is just one of many learning venues, that learning takes place in different ways in different forums, and that all learning is valuable. (Golding, Davies and Volkoff 2001) Bringing learning to learners, wherever they are, relies on breaking down barriers which separate schools and other educational institutions from the perceived outside world. To this end, schools of the future will become more open and more closely connected with wider communities. Educators will operate in an increasingly complex environment, as mediators and collaborators with a number of broad and diverse groups throughout society.

The implications of lifelong and lifewide learning for teacher education are manifold, but they suggest that a new range of skills will be required, to do less with imparting defined knowledge than with shaping a kind of person. In the knowledge economy, excellent learners will be autonomous and self-directed – designers of their own learning experiences, in collaboration with others as well as by themselves. (Gee 2000: 51) They will need to be flexible, with problem-solving skills, multiple strategies for tackling a task, and a solutions-orientation to knowledge. (Cope and Kalantzis 2000) They will also be collaborative, recognising that knowledge is created collaboratively, whether in work teams, in scientific research laboratories or through community development. They will themselves be good teachers and communicators, and of open sensibility, able to work productively with linguistic and cultural diversity.

(Gee 2000: 51; ACDE 2001) Their intelligence may be communicative, numerate, technical or process-oriented; it may be emotional, analytical, creative or critical. (Gonczi 2002) Finally, good learners will be broadly knowledgeable, able to engage with the different interpretive frameworks and contexts of specific information.

Promoting this kind of learning requires the possession of different skills from those historically taught to educators. This is not to deny that many contemporary educators are already reflective practitioners, proactive towards change, and well connected to the broader community. The need for these attributes, however, will surely become more acute. Given the central role of educators in the 'knowledge economy,' and the skills they will increasingly require, several substantial changes to teacher education are required.

First, teachers will need to focus on learning and teaching the 'new basics.' The new basics can be listed broadly as ICT, foreign language and entrepreneurial and problem-solving skills, but they are about new kinds of learning beyond mere content changes. Literacy, for instance, is not only about rules and their correct application. It is about understanding how a text works in order to participate in its meanings, working out the context and purposes of the text, and learning from your successes and mistakes. (ACDE 2001: 90).

Given the location of knowledge in corporate and cultural memory, individual learning capability is today strongly linked to the capacity to collaborate. Teacher education programs need to factor this

change into both practice and assessment techniques. Indeed, the need for broader assessment is the logical corollary of the need for broader curricula, perhaps even its antecedent, as curriculum is in part driven by assessment. Educators must increasingly endeavour to maximise student participation and to accommodate and support different learning styles, and this is rarely possible under regimes of universal, standardised testing.

A number of assessment techniques which more accurately measure the full range of skills required by students will become increasingly important in the new economy. Project assessment, for example, based on in-depth tasks would measure broad knowledgeability and a flexible solutions orientation to knowledge, and enable measurement of multiple intelligences. Performance assessment, based on the planning, doing and completion of a task, would measure a wide range of skills, including organisation and problem-solving. Group assessment, of collective work or the collaborative capacities of individual group members, would measure collaborative skills. Finally, portfolio assessment would enable open sensibilities to be measured as well as the individual strengths of diverse individuals.

While educators are often constrained in their attempts to implement broader assessment techniques, every effort must be made to encourage diverse learning experiences and to reward different kinds of student learning in the classroom. A more diverse range of teaching models and delivery strategies needs to be explored. As New Learning emphasises, the intelligence of good learners in the new economy may be theoretical, applied or factual, and emotional, analytical, creative or critical. While it is not clear which instructional methods will prove most effective in the preparation of educators, it is clear that greater diversity is required, and that broader conceptions of

knowledge and intelligence should be sought.

Further, educators of the future will require unprecedented flexibility and will need to be excellent learners, frequently arriving at situations without pre-ordained answers. Problem-solving skills will be essential to facing new and continual challenges: teachers will need to be active and sceptical inquirers, aware of alternative perspectives and approaches to education, according to constantly changing cultural and technical needs. Teacher education of the future will focus less on the attainment of particular skills, and more on reflective practice. The recent Crossroads Ministerial discussion paper emphasises that, 'we need a system that produces graduates who can think critically and have adaptable skill sets as well as technical expertise.' (Department of Education, Science and Training 2002: 14) However, as Alan Reid explains, the mere allocation of more time for initial teachers to be trained in schools, 'simply reproduces the status quo and reinforces the idea that teachers are technicians.' (2001) Instead, Reid advocates a model based on enquiry into educational practice, which would involve project work and greater collaborative learning between students, teachers and academics. (2001)

This is not to refute the value of initial teachers taking classes in designated schools, but to suggest important, and often neglected, ways of adding to this experience. Mentoring, team teaching, and time for collegial discussion and feedback are all vital to the goals of collaborative and flexible learning. Project oriented tasks which reflect and promote the importance of teamwork and collaborative scholarship also need greater recognition in teacher education programs.

Finally, teacher education needs to be ongoing. The provision of continuing professional development will be crucial. While this remains largely neglected in Australia, there is progress elsewhere to provide

sabbaticals, secondments and international exchanges. The need for greater creativity and resources here is pressing: we are unlikely to keep the finest teachers in the profession without more commitment to programs of reskilling and professional development.

Educators are at the heart of the knowledge economy. Teachers in the Twenty-first Century are increasingly being understood as knowledge workers with the power to facilitate, motivate and collaborate. By promoting diverse learning styles, in engaging with the new basics of curriculum and assessment, in collaborating through mentoring and team teaching, in undertaking ongoing professional development, and in facilitating autonomous and collaborative learning in their students, the potential impact of twenty-first century educators is unparalleled. Prospective educators must enter the profession knowing they have the opportunity not only to influence children at school, but to promote a new cadre of knowledge workers. Far from ending in the classroom, the impact of effective educators on their students will be visible throughout and across those students' lives.

Professor Mary Kalantzis is Dean of the Faculty of Education, Language and Community Services at RMIT University, Melbourne, and President of the Australian Council of Deans of Education. Recent publications include *Multiliteracies: Literacy Learning and the Design of Social Futures* (MacMillan 2000) and *New Learning: A Charter for Australian Education* (Australian Council of Deans of Education 2001).

Dr Andrew Harvey is Executive Officer of the Australian Council of Deans of Education. His research interests are comparative international education perspectives, curriculum and lifelong learning. Recent publications include 'A public curriculum' (Kalantzis, Cope and Harvey, in *A Public Conversation*, Reid and Thomson (Eds)) and 'Lessons of the New Economy' (Kalantzis and Harvey, EQ, April 2002).



# Towards collaborative global education networks

Gerry White reports on the current thinking that's now directing the development of information and communication technologies across all education sectors and recommends a learner-centred approach in designing and delivering ICT services.

Global Gateways: A Guide to Online Knowledge Networks is a first attempt at mapping and analysing parallel developments in online services around the world.

In March 2002, Australia's national online education and training agency *education.au limited* hosted a Global Summit of Online Knowledge Networks in association with the bi-annual World Congress on Information Technology held this year in Adelaide. The summit brought together leaders, specialists and policy makers from all sectors of Australian education and training and from around the world with a view to establishing a network of international alliances to address issues of common concern.

During a series of round table discussions summit delegates identified a number of common themes and explored key areas where they believed collaborative action could be undertaken. They consistently called for members of online communities to work together towards common aims, emphasising the value of thinking globally, sharing that thinking and acting locally. Eight 'actions' were recommended by Global Summit delegates to ensure the effective development and use of online services and resources in education and training into the future:

- spread the word about the benefits of online services, and involve more people in the use of these services through expanded access and greater public awareness
- establish, develop and extend networking *via* online communities
- reconceptualise the role of teachers and teaching
- draw on government and institutional frameworks and resources
- demystify online education and training services

- establish online knowledge standards frameworks for pedagogy, technical issues, professional development and values
- develop information and communication technologies for education and training personnel across boundaries, and
- establish a seamless global learning framework – starting with looking at what is there and mapping it.

This last recommendation, in particular, reflects a 'maturing' of online services as we move beyond the experimentation, rapid development and proliferation of online services of the past few years towards a focus on integration and consolidation.

*Global Gateways: A Guide to Online Knowledge Networks* is a first attempt at mapping and analysing parallel developments in online services around the world. Developed as a resource for the Global Summit, the guide is the result of a research project undertaken by the Australian Council for Educational Research on behalf of *education.au limited*.

The project attempted, for the first time, to identify:

- what's out there – a listing of educational networks from around the world
- how to define it – a range of categories, terminology and criteria to help make sense of the variety of networks, and
- who is using the services – a range of profiles of network users.

The research has found and described 158 sites from around the world with similar services. While no review can be definitive, and sites change names, arrive and disappear

suddenly, the report provides a valuable snapshot of the major ongoing educational gateways at the time the review was completed.

The report also provides considerable detail about the technical and non-technical meanings of terms used by site developers and managers. The importance of getting the terminology right is illustrated by the list of names used at various times to describe similar types of services that collect and catalogue resources for a particular audience. These include: portal; vortal; gateway; hub; network; directory; digital library; clearinghouse; grid; and internet resource guide. Each term implies a slightly different kind of service, for a slightly different kind of audience. The report performs a valuable service by providing definitions for each of these main terms. It also makes clear that it is up to site developers and service providers to work towards a common vocabulary for these services.

The *Global Gateways* researchers also explored user characteristics and behaviour and discovered four common types of behaviour:

- the searcher, who looks for a specific word or phrase
- the explorer, who uses the index and goes browsing
- the self improver, who may use online services as a substitute for traditional courses or professional development – a personal gymnasium
- participators, who are usually younger and are looking to connect with others. For them, online services are about communicating and sharing.



A key recommendation for site developers and managers is to take a learner-centred approach in designing and delivering their services.

The report describes the sector and its participants using the analogy of a shopping mall, where different types of shoppers have different aims and behaviours and approach their environment in different ways: targeting a particular item; window shopping; reading magazines on racks and talking to marketers; or socialising as an integral part of the process.

The research revealed that gender roles tend to shift between the shopping mall and the web. In the mall, female shoppers tend more towards browsing, but on the web, as time-poor professionals, female educators tend to look very much for specific sites and become easily irritated if those sites are hard to find. By contrast, males who might be in and out of a mall shopping for one item tend to browse more on the web. Of course, preferred modes of behaviour vary, and can change over time. There is already some evidence of blurring of categories in practice, but the four types are useful for providers who wish to target their services more precisely, or design these to appeal to particular markets.

A key recommendation for site developers and managers is to take a learner-centred approach in designing and delivering their

services and to undertake the market research that is needed to inform their decision making. This is coupled with the need to monitor trends continually. The report suggests particular areas in which some gateways are strong. These include the provision of explicit objectives and quality assurance and methodologies, with opportunities for user engagement and feedback. Use of the gateway should involve minimum effort and time to get the best and most precisely targeted information, because of good design features. The best gateways also keep their information up to date, although the cost of such continual maintenance is high. The trends identified by the report include: more 'one-stop shops'; collaborative learning; corporate-educational alliances; and flexible access and delivery geared to lifelong learning.

A major implication for online service providers to emerge is the need to move towards online knowledge networks which provide comprehensive but easy links within and between sites and that facilitate the development and work of a community of educational learners. Another is the need to develop greatly enhanced technological skills among users and providers alike

– or transparent styles of delivery that make such skills unnecessary.

The findings of the *Global Gateways* research constitute a timely challenge. They provide a call for action at local and global levels to work as an online community and develop the services needed in the global education environment.

*education.au limited* is a non-profit company established in 1997 and owned by all Australian education and training Ministers. It builds education networks supported by distributed online information services for schools, vocational education and training and universities through the use of collaborative, national processes involving stakeholder engagement at many levels. EdNA Online (<http://www.edna.edu.au>) is the original online service managed by *education.au limited*. It provides collaboration and networking opportunities for educators and students of all ages to learn together, share ideas and find information through discussions, noticeboards and news services. A range of sibling websites, utilising the <edna.edu.au> domain name, have also been developed to extend the services available via EdNA Online. Government and non-government schooling systems, the Vocational Education and Training sector and the Higher Education sector contribute content to EdNA Online and promote its services. A major development based on the EdNA Online data sources and services is the Government Education Portal (<http://www.education.gov.au>), which provides national education and training information. The Commonwealth Department of Education Science and Training funds this service, while state and territory education departments share recurrent costs with the Commonwealth. This is an edited version of a keynote address at Edutech 2002, the 12th Learning Technology Exhibition for Education and Training, Melbourne, in August.

Gerry White is the CEO of *education.au limited*.



David Reynolds talks about the research and practices underpinning Middle Years education. Interview with Steve Holden

## A little more conversation

**W**e need to create the conditions for teachers to focus on the needs of their students at a particular year level and develop collaborative approaches with their teaching colleagues and students that deal with those needs.' Put simply, educators need the time with their students for both to get connected. Beyond that, says David Reynolds, educators need to look at the multi-disciplinary curriculum and ways to help students in managing their own learning. 'I'm interested to explore further the benefits of a problem-based learning approach for adolescents and to examine other classroom-based initiatives that are helping kids with their learning.' That, in a nutshell, is Reynolds's research brief, after receiving a Lindsay Thompson fellowship to investigate Middle Years approaches to learning. Reynolds, a teacher at Princes Hill Secondary College, Melbourne, is a practitioner whose educational approach combines research and practice. The research, he says, shows that learning for Middle Years students generally flattens out in terms of literacy skills and

attitudes to and engagement with schooling. 'There's even a drop for students in the lowest twenty-fifth percentile,' he says. 'We know, too, it's an age when kids engage in increasing numbers of risk-taking activities.' The research indicates adolescents need approaches in schooling that maintain a protective environment. 'Next to families,' Reynolds says, 'schools offer the most important protective factors in kids' lives. In some cases, schools are the one place where kids come in regular contact with adults who actually care for them and about them.' There's substantial research, Reynolds points out, to confirm the sorts of experience teachers of the Middle Years have been reporting anecdotally for years: teaching students through the eleven- to fourteen-years age range is hard work. Adolescents' needs and the way secondary schools and the curriculum have traditionally operated have not made a good fit. Research coming out of the University of Melbourne's Centre for Adolescent Health Gatehouse Project indicates the importance of the connectedness of students with their school. The Middle Years Research and Development – MYRAD – project, run by the University of Melbourne's Centre for Applied Educational Research and the Victorian Department of Education and Training, has gathered data that support that finding from more than sixty primary and secondary school clusters. 'MYRAD has brought a huge amount of data to the surface on literacy learning and the thinking curriculum – examining how kids recognise and can build on their own thinking and learning.'

Reynolds's key interest at Princes Hill has been engagement. He and colleagues have gathered data using MYRAD surveys on the model of Peter Hill. 'We wanted to audit our program and use the data we collected and

further qualitative and quantitative surveys to focus on improvement.' Central to his approach is the interconnectedness of research and practice: for Reynolds and his colleagues, the one informs the other. 'We've looked at school and class organisation and length of lesson periods, and made changes designed for improved learning, so we needed to measure for improvements in student engagement. Changes are not simple; they involved a re-distribution of time allocations across the key learning areas, and changes to teacher allotments. That involved a little more conversation than you might expect,' Reynolds says, 'and that led to some very productive debate about what was essential in the curriculum.' A further structural change involved teaming teachers. Princes Hill is trialling paired classes at Years Seven and Eight with paired teachers taking Maths and Science, English and SOSE, and Physical Education, Sport and Health Education. 'That means teachers are taking a substantial number of those classes with the same students. I take two Year Eights for English and SOSE and share the same staff room with my paired colleagues – and we're the Home Group teachers too. The thinking is to focus on the students, to know what's going on for each student in terms of engagement, practical matters like work schedules, homework and liaising with parents, and to enable us to consider interdisciplinary issues. It's also about creating the opportunities to enable teachers to develop their own learning. We need to create the conditions to help teachers to develop their pedagogy – teaming is one good way to do that: it allows very good professional development.'

It's essential, Reynolds says, that teachers engage in dialogue with professional colleagues, but

dialogue tends to be fruitless unless it's based on trust. 'There's a lot of pressure on teachers to be correct,' Reynolds points out. 'Good PD happens when teachers are able to let their guard down a bit and "fess up." The usual PD questions, of course, are where, when, and who pays?'

The MYRAD project neatly dealt with those questions and, says Reynolds, provided excellent PD opportunities through the research structures put in place, through teachers' own action research and through the opportunities built into the project for continuing discussion and visits across schools. But with MYRAD now ended, what happens next? 'Jeremy Ludowyke, Principal at Princes Hill, put in an application for Commonwealth funding through the Quality Teaching Program to continue the project in partnership with the University of Melbourne. That has enabled us to run PD for Middle Years teachers in professional learning teams, trialling innovative teaching strategies in action research that involves dialogue with PD partners and subsequent network meetings to share, critique and develop strategies through professional dialogue.' The advantage, says Reynolds, is that PD involves primary and secondary teachers across the K-12 range, with teachers setting the PD agenda. Importantly, he points out, 'Teachers are working on the basis of the needs of actual kids. That's working much better than the "self-serve" approach to PD.' Different kinds of schools, different kinds of students, different curricula, different resources, different school leadership, different state policies: what are the common issues that schools need to address? To establish and maintain any program, Reynolds says, you need a good leadership team, professional educators who are astute, well-informed and well-connected at the regional level and beyond, who understand and are able to promote and support the program. 'The thing about Princes Hill is that it's a very democratic institution. That's meant that things are

always talked through, teachers haven't felt that they've been railroaded into following a fad.' The risk in innovation, Reynolds concedes, is that educators can feel they'll be caught wearing some new set of emperor's new clothes. 'We've worked from substantial evidence that we've agreed is persuasive and that's helping us to see what works and to build on that. It's been vital to have a thorough review and analysis of what you are doing and the innovation you introduce. Jo Hoyne, the Curriculum Coordinator at Princes Hill, led a review of our Years Seven to Ten curriculum, so that we could see exactly what was happening in the school. Then we used a trial approach to test our innovative program.'

The tension between working with homogeneous groups of students engaged in their own learning in a familiar and protected environment and the need for specialised learning remains a common problem. 'We still operate with specialised teaching and learning areas,' Reynolds says. 'Even in, say, Arts and Technology, however, we've been able to reduce the range of different student-teacher contacts. That's also allowed students to develop greater and deeper knowledge and skills.'

Facilities of Education are feeling definite pressure as teachers' needs change, says Reynolds, to focus on the learner, and respond in terms of problem-based learning. 'There's still a cultural divide between primary and secondary approaches, and teachers seem to have mixed views. Many secondary teachers are moving to a student-centred approach – English teachers have been using one for decades – while primary teachers seem to be calling for greater specialisation – and specialised facilities. These are tricky issues for those involved in teacher training.' At the school level, Reynolds says, teaching allotments tend to resolve the specialisation debate on a practical level. 'It tends still to be the case at Princes Hill that allotments are spread from Seven to Twelve. What we're asking is for teachers to specialise in Years Seven to Nine,

### Middle Schooling

#### Geoff Mills

Middle Schooling at Ursula Frayne Catholic College, Perth, a dual campus K-12 co-educational college structured into four sub-schools, embraces inter-disciplinary team delivery, multi-age grouping of students and flexible timetable arrangements. Students are grouped into three Cluster groups to help them feel valued and safe and to foster mutual respect. Pedagogical emphases include the development of positive relationships between students and students and between teachers and students; collaborative learning activities; opportunities to develop independent learning skills; integration of technology; cross-curricular learning and opportunities for all students to achieve success.

*Geoff Mills is the Head of Middle School at Ursula Frayne Catholic College, WA*

#### Sue Jones

Our aim at Victor Harbor High School has been to enable teachers to work together, teaming, having visual and physical proximity. We wanted to let teachers work together easily in the classroom and the staffroom, and let students feel that they belong in a community. Middle schooling aims to encourage community involvement. Our Middle School students also need to have the knowledge and skills to use information and communication technology whenever appropriate. ICT is an integrated part of the curriculum, a tool to be used as necessary or appropriate.

*Sue Jones is the Middle School Coordinator at Victor Harbor High School, SA.*



but there's still room for teachers to take senior classes, to see where your younger kids go, how they develop.' That's as it should be, he says. No Middle Years program has dispelled the understanding that Years Eight and Nine are hard work. 'You're still there dealing with the roller-coaster ride of adolescence. If that's always going to be the case, you want an approach that addresses those needs.'

### The next step

So you want to develop your Middle Years program further at your school. What's your best next step?

- 'You've got to have your evidence, from the classroom. Find out if students are turning up to school, if they're engaged. Look at data on student suspensions.'
- 'Find like-minded people who want to share the approach. Take on small projects, a different teaching approach or way of organising students that doesn't require radical change in the school. Share your findings with colleagues at a KLA or staff meeting.'
- 'Get a dialogue going about what people think and believe about Middle Years students. Values and beliefs are at the centre, for example, of Peter Hill's Middle Years model.'
- 'Look at what other schools do. There are very few schools that don't feel the pressure of competition. Leadership teams want to know what other schools are doing. Invite teachers in from other schools.'



# Online research

## Ten key messages for teachers and managers in VET

**Hugh Guthrie considers the latest research into further education and online programs as one learning approach in a menu of flexible options, and concludes that online learning programs can work, but they depend on collaboration, careful design, thorough evaluation and proper support – and you need to consider costs.**

For the last three years the National Centre for Vocational Education Research has been managing nine research projects into online learning funded through the Flexible Learning Advisory Group (FLAG), examining a diversity of topics, including:

- operational issues
- the scope of online usage in the VET sector
- online delivery in the VET sector: improving cost effectiveness
- e-business and online learning: connections and opportunities for VET
- learner views and teaching practice
- learner expectations and experiences: an examination of student views of support in online learning
- 'The secret is the teacher': quality in online learning, taking the learner's view
- one size doesn't fit all: pedagogy in the online environment
- the development of quality online assessment in VET
- regional and rural learners
- 'where to' with online learning in regional Australia?
- learning online: benefits and barriers in regional Australia.

I want to concentrate on some of the key messages for teachers and managers in VET providers based on the nine projects to consider their implications.

**The key issue is flexibility, it's not about using just online approaches**

Rather than a stand alone option, online learning is

normally part of a 'hybrid' model of delivery, where approaches are mixed and matched, often on the basis of individual needs – just another way of providing learning and enhancing communication options. It is rarely an end in itself. In fact, some students note that they have to study online because no other options are available.

Students particularly value flexibility. It gives them a greater measure of control over the time, place, pace and approach to their learning. It enables or assists access for some, like students from some disability groups, who would otherwise not be able to study readily. For others, particularly those who are unemployed or who have low levels of household income, the technology requirements and access to the internet may limit or exclude access to programs with significant online components.

**We cannot easily find out how much online learning there is**

Part of the reason that we cannot readily identify the amount of online learning is that it's usually only one of a range of approaches. Where 'online learning' begins and ends conceptually, and how much 'online learning' there has to be before it is a significant component is an issue which seems not to have been resolved. So providers cannot say how much online learning is going on. In part this is also because consolidated and consistent data are not available. A wide range of providers just do not know in any detail how individual modules are being delivered in particular locations, and therefore how many students are involved. It appears

that the numbers using online approaches are small, but anecdotally it looks as though they are growing relatively fast. Efforts are being made at the national level to assess how better data might be collected. But it is possible that it would not be all that easy to do, and might even place a significant burden on providers. The value of collecting better information and the time and effort needed to collect it must be carefully weighed.

**Online learning is not a cheap option, but there are ways to make it more cost-effective**

The cost and cost-effectiveness of online learning is difficult to determine. Nevertheless, evidence suggests it's likely to be more costly than conventional approaches, but also likely to deliver better outcomes and satisfaction levels. Development costs, particularly for learning resources, are likely to be higher. The message is to keep the resources as simple as possible and do not develop complex or sophisticated approaches without good reason, especially if they also impose potential limits on learner access.

The costs of developing and running online programs can be reduced through some re-design of work processes, better integration and standardisation

of platforms and systems across the provider, and by using off-the-shelf systems and resources where possible. Costs of delivery can also be reduced by making better use of resources when the online option enables the program to tap new or wider student markets and increase enrolments.

**Beware of technocrats bearing gifts**

Making better use of technology is not about replacing teachers with technology. Educators and managers need to beware letting the technical tail wag either the organisational or teaching and learning dogs.

How might you do that? When you're developing or managing flexible programs, including those with an online component, you need to ask yourself, and others, whether or not the approach and technologies

proposed actually meet a real need. You also need to ask whether they represent the best and most cost-effective way of doing things. There is an issue of 'over design,' which is not only a cost-effectiveness issue. There are things that online learning is good at doing and others where it's not so good. This needs to be clearly understood and used when adopting the approach. online approaches are effective:

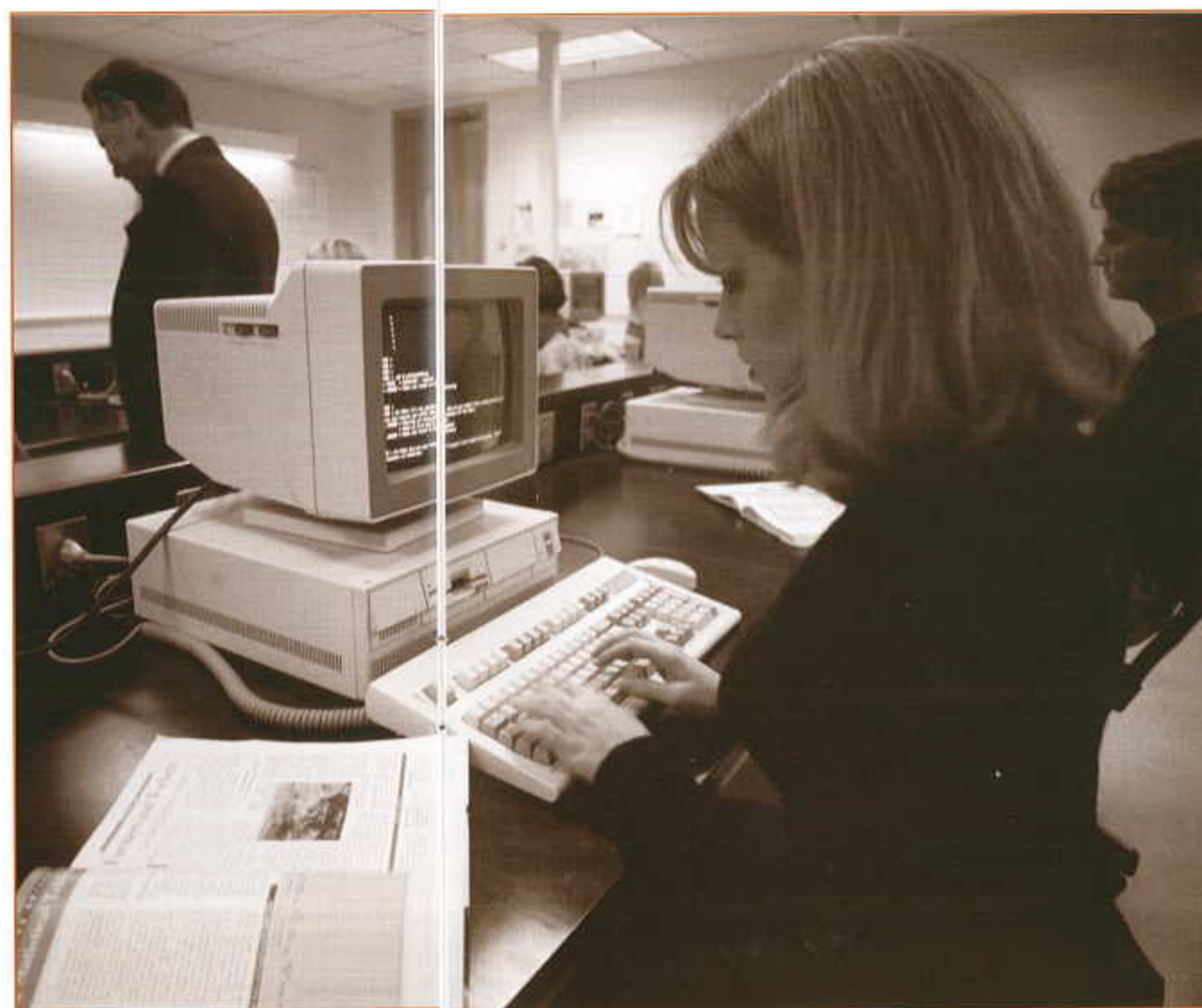
- when delivery mode and content are similar (say, in IT). In this case online learning provides a form of workplace training that suits content and students, and
- when the assumptions about characteristics and traits made within courses are matched to skills and attributes of learners, that is, when learners are motivated, literate, well organised and have other higher order skills.

What is implemented may be too technically sophisticated and go well beyond the capacities, resources and needs of those accessing the program. Technical specifications therefore need to be based on business as well as teaching and learning needs. It's not about purchasing technology and then looking for a problem it can solve. It is more about starting small and working up. This requires taking a more long-term view.

- Message 1: The key issue is flexibility, it's not about using on-line approaches.
- Message 2: We cannot easily find out how much on-line learning there is.
- Message 3: On-line learning is not a cheap option, but there are ways to make it more cost effective.
- Message 4: Beware of technocrats bearing gifts.
- Message 5: Use market research, plan and evaluate.
- Message 6: Adopt a 'whole of business' approach where you can – better integration is needed.
- Message 7: Staff involved in on-line learning don't believe their managers understand their problems.
- Message 8: Staff need proper resourcing and support.
- Message 9: A range of industrial relations issues need to be looked at to properly support flexible approaches, including on-line learning.
- Message 10: Funding models are tied to past practices and need to change.

*Educators and managers need to beware letting the technical tail wag either the organisational or teaching and learning dogs.*

*Keep the resources as simple as possible and do not develop complex or sophisticated approaches without good reason.*



### Use market research, plan and evaluate

The research shows that students value a well-planned and organised program of learning. However, the research also suggests that providers may not be conducting sufficient market research before embarking on the development of online approaches to determine whether or not online approaches have a legitimate place in the range of learning options that are eventually offered. The questions you need to ask include: what is the size of the market; do key segments of the customer base really want it; what do they want particularly and with what other options?

The research also suggests there's a need for more evaluation of the outcomes of existing flexible and online programs to look for ways to improve them further. The resources, time and the skills may not be available within providers for this, so increased

support and resources are needed. Action needs to be taken on the available evaluation findings, which may have resource implications, or may require changes to teaching and learning approaches or support services.

Better planning of online teaching and learning and the related services are also needed so that more integrated and customer-focussed approaches are developed and adopted. This means looking at the issue from a 'whole-of-business' perspective and planning accordingly. While there's no formula, networking offers a way of finding out how others are addressing the issue.

### Adopt a 'whole-of-business' approach where you can – better integration is needed

A number of Australian VET providers are inventively using e-business practices – doing more business electronically – and are already moving towards bringing e-business and online learning closer together. That inventiveness has a positive impact on a range of customer services such as online learning.

Traditionally administrative and support processes have been kept largely separate from those concerned with teaching and learning. Now, back and front office functions need to be merged and used to provide a wide range of other services for students, and for functions such as marketing, enrolment and information provision. There are other e-business drivers as well, like improved internal efficiencies and improved supplier relationships. Even so, barriers within providers to achieving these improved customer services and business efficiencies still exist. These include costs, user resistance, technology availability, limited staff skills and organisational inexperience. There are significant risks associated with e-business if, say, key suppliers go out of business or the technologies chosen are replaced rapidly by newer, possibly better, ones. Privacy invasions and legal issues also need to be addressed when

embedding online learning within an e-business approach. It's therefore no simple matter to merge online learning and e-business. The secret to success lies in good planning. Specific research highlights a new business philosophy that many VET managers are developing where more flexible approaches to learning are seen as an important part of being in the education and training business. It's about being demand-driven, not supply-driven. It's also about being market-driven, not ruled by technology. Adopting an e-business solution which meets the provider's – but especially its customers' – needs offers a way of achieving these business goals.

### Staff involved in online learning don't believe their managers understand their problems

Teachers are generally positive about online learning but their jobs are changing. They are working and communicating with their students differently, and are managing more individualised learning programs with their students. They also find that they need to know the program content more fully so that they can provide individual advice on fruitful pathways for individual students. It's no longer a matter of preparing as you go. More of the preparation now has to be done 'up front.' A one-size-fits-all approach no longer exists. Teachers are working different hours and in different ways, which they say is not being properly reflected by the ways in which contact teaching time is traditionally recognised and measured. Beyond this, some do not feel their managers understand what their work now involves, and that these managers are not therefore helping to support the new ways in which they have to work. There's also evidence, from this and other research, that educators feel overworked, overwhelmed and unappreciated. It's all 'go go go,' and there's no time for reflection and consolidation. This, in turn, can affect staff morale and ultimately the quality of what is delivered to clients.

For managers, it's very important just to show interest in and concern about what staff are doing. Encouraging participation by staff, inclusion and just making things easier rather than harder to implement and do is important from the teachers' perspective so that they feel appreciated and 'in control.'

### Staff need proper resourcing and support

Organisational structures and infrastructures within providers need to reflect the use of flexible approaches, including online learning as a delivery approach. In particular, there needs to be adequate technical and design support and infrastructure in the organisation. The research has found that some student information systems cannot cope well with the demands of flexible modes of delivery.

In addition to these structural needs, strong and effective working relationships need to be in place across the organisation to ensure that an integrated approach to product and service delivery is in place for clients. There's little point in having the structures right, but the working relationships wrong. While the in-house and outsourcing of services may be mixed and matched, this has to be done appropriately to give the organisation the operational efficiency, effectiveness and the depth it needs. It's especially important that operational problems, once detected, can be addressed and fixed rapidly and effectively.

Finally, and importantly, budgets and budgeting approaches need to reflect organisational needs and priorities, including the use of flexible and online delivery. So these, too, have to reflect the way the organisation works now, not the way it did in the past.

A range of industrial relations issues need to be looked at to properly support flexible approaches, including online learning.

There are three issues that the research highlights in particular:

- terms and conditions of employment

- the casualisation of the provider workforce, and
- professional development.

As noted above, teachers' workloads, ways of working and the ways of recognising teaching load have all changed significantly. It's probably approaching crunch time in terms of looking seriously at how work is actually performed and better reflecting this reality in terms of enterprise and other agreements about work practices.

In addition, the casualisation of the provider workforce, while reducing costs, has not delivered the real workforce flexibility that may be needed to respond to more flexible approaches to delivery. Delivery approaches are still bound tightly to particular times, processes and locations for delivery. Students really value personal contact with one special individual who is there for them when they need them. They don't want a call-centre approach to delivery, dealing with a new person every time. There may therefore be a case for movement to appropriate technical solutions, or more full-time staff, while recognising the different and diverse ways in which teachers now have to work. The quest for getting the maximum number of contact hours may have been achieved at the cost of enough time to reflect, plan, design, develop, implement and improve.

Finally, staff have real and on-going professional development needs that need to be addressed. Sufficient time and funds, and good processes, need to be available to ensure that they have the skills and knowledge to perform their new work roles well. Not all professional development needs to be formal. Some of the best professional development can be encouraged through better teamwork, with any required expert help accessible on a needs basis. In relation to flexible and online approaches, the professional development needs identified by the research include skills in using the technology and maintaining current technical awareness. In addition, skills are needed in learning-resource and

### Where to from here?

Currently, the research is investigating factors influencing demand and the professional development needs of contract and casual staff. But in addition, the wider range of initiatives funded under the auspices of the Flexible Learning Advisory group should be examined. ([www.flexiblelearning.net.au/index.htm](http://www.flexiblelearning.net.au/index.htm))

As the research is progressively completed NCVER is publishing it, available at [www.ncver.edu.au/online.htm/](http://www.ncver.edu.au/online.htm/) In addition, NCVER is producing a range of value-added products available through the web site and in print form, including Research at a glance. Other organisations and flexible learning networks are pursuing the research messages, disseminating them further and considering their implications.

NCVER will publish a book of readings that summarises this and other significant Australian and overseas research, and will run a series of workshops in most states in November and December 2002. See [www.ncver.edu.au](http://www.ncver.edu.au) for details.

program development, flexible approaches to assessment, improved skills in facilitation – such as mediating online discussion sessions – as well as developing the literacy and writing skills needed to make best use of the available media and approaches. Educators also need more formal evaluation skills to help them reflect and improve on what they are doing.

### Funding models are tied to past practices and need to change

Finally, it's clear that there needs to be a more fundamental examination of the ways in which providers are funded. The requirements for more flexible approaches to learning delivery have placed significant pressures on current funding models which are geared to approaches that assume institutional and classroom-based delivery is the predominant mode. While this probably remains fundamentally true, it's time to examine more critically and in greater detail the nature of what providers are actually doing and how they may need to work in the future to reflect the expectations of their clients and stakeholders. There's a need to determine whether or not there are better ways of allocating funds and obtaining the resources to support the wider range of ways in which they are being asked to work and to deliver their programs.

Hugh Guthrie is the Manager of Product Development and Innovation at the National Centre for Vocational Education Research.



### Online learning

#### What teachers say

Nadine Creswell-Myatt, travel writer and a teacher of Professional Writing at Box Hill Institute of TAFE, says online learning has not meant the end of traditional teaching. 'The teacher is still the central figure in the learning process, and is never further than an email message away,' she says. One assumption prevalent in the education sector is that online learning diminishes personal contact. Creswell-Myatt says this is a 'furfy.' 'You do communicate with other people, and you still use notes and books. There are usually face-to-face options which allow you to meet other students and teachers.'

Elizabeth Bradbury, a business studies teacher at Northern Melbourne Institute of TAFE saw herself as 'a real test case.' 'I didn't know a lot about computers. Every Monday at six the students and I would log on from our homes. Then we would work through the issues as we would in class, except that responses were typed. It seemed strange at first, but soon it was as if I could hear them speaking rather than just reading the words.' Besides offering greater flexibility, Bradbury found students taking the online option achieved an average grade higher than their on-campus colleagues.

According to Creswell-Myatt, access needn't be an obstruction to online learning. 'Computer and internet access at home isn't essential. You can use computers in public libraries, community venues and the workplace. And you don't have to be a computer whiz to study online.'

#### LINKS:

[www.flexiblelearning.net.au/toolbox](http://www.flexiblelearning.net.au/toolbox)

[www.opentraining.com.au/proj.html](http://www.opentraining.com.au/proj.html)

[www.tafefrontiers.com.au](http://www.tafefrontiers.com.au)

<http://tafe.ivt.com.au/courses.php>

# The national perspective

By Steve Holden

Just how the accreditation functions and developmental functions will square up and how each will articulate with career benchmarks – and salary increments – remains to be seen.

## Professional standards

Agreement across all states and territories is comprehensive: educators need to define teaching in terms of professional standards articulated according to some kind of professional career structure.

The standards approach driven strongly by stakeholders like Lawrence Ingvarson at the Australian Council for Educational Research in tandem with national English, Maths and Science subject associations, has seen significant grass-roots input, considered by many in the profession as a necessary precondition for the success of any policy. Commonwealth funding to consolidate the process has been a fillip to the development of a coherent approach, most noticeably in the generally cooperative and constructive outcomes of the National Meeting of Professional Educators last April facilitated by the Australian College of Educators that brought together seventy-five organisations within the profession to confirm, define and debate the standards issues.

That meeting usefully articulated some of the difficulties that will need to be faced in developing any national standards architecture. Described as 'creative tensions,' these include:

- the tension between teaching standards in theory and 'living these out' in everyday learning environments
- the tension between general and subject specific standards
- the tension between profession-driven and policy-driven standards – 'done with' or 'done to'?
- the tension between standards and industrial awards and the processes by which they are determined
- the tension between the need for a 'swift resolution' on standards and the current

expansion of research and thinking in this area

- the tension between a fundamental reconceptualisation of against simply value-adding to the role of educators.

Most noticeable in terms of outcomes, the April meeting builds a program for continuing development in 2002 and 2003 with a degree of collaborative energy and apparent goodwill surprising in the profession. The meeting also indicates apparent agreement on the sense of urgency required in the development of professional standards. As Carol Adams, chief executive of the General Teaching Council in England, put it in her address: 'If we are to meet the challenge of educating the next generation in a way that equips them for the future, then what is needed is nothing less than transformation of the teaching profession.'

So far, professional standards have been discussed in two ways: defining what expert teachers know and can do, acknowledging the existing capacity of teachers with some reference to rewards for expertise through a promotional career structure; and defining what novice teachers ought to know and be able to do, specifying the sorts of professional development needs that aspirational experts ought to pursue. In both acknowledgement and developmental approaches, some effort has gone into ensuring that 'standard' is not reduced to 'minimum requirements.' Just how the accreditation functions and developmental functions will square up and how each will articulate with career benchmarks – and salary increments – remains to be seen.

While the national subject associations have driven much of the standards debate in terms of the specific forms of knowledge

and skills typical of an expert in particular fields, many standards defined so far encompass generic knowledge and skills. Generalisable standards and uncertainty over the subject-specific jurisdiction of subject associations across primary and secondary sectors suggest that accreditation and development are most likely to be codified at a level broader than 'subjects' or 'key learning areas.'

Whether that will lead to national or 'kind of' national standards remains unclear, but most activity now appears to focus on standards at the state or territory level. The Victorian Institute of Teaching, now up and running, has a mandate to develop and maintain professional standards for all Victorian teachers across state, Catholic and independent schools and appears likely to have a major impact on the future geography of the teaching profession. Legislation for a Western Australian College of Teaching is currently before the WA parliament. (A Western Australian Institute of Teaching would have delivered WAIT as its acronym.) The shape of the WACT in terms of professional standards is likely to be influenced by the VIT, national subject association developments and the competencies for the WA Teacher Career Structure introduced as part of a certified agreement for the majority of WA teachers in 1996. Teachers in Queensland, Tasmania, the Northern Territory and the Australian Capital Territory are variously trialling standards, expressed as competency assessment, registration requirements or professional pathways. Teachers looking at professional standards in New South Wales may be in for a wait while the government considers recommendations from the Teacher Education Taskforce piggybacked on Gregor Ramsey's *Quality Matters*.

While few stakeholders have wrestled publicly with the industrial implications of professional standards, President of the Australian Council of Deans of Education, Mary Kalantzis, has insisted that standards must be linked to industrial agreements. While the professional drive through national standards is gaining momentum through the national focus, the industrial bargaining that might fruitfully underpin it appears to be floundering. Keep in mind, industrial agreements are negotiated at the state and territory level, so there would appear still to be some way to go in the national standards debate.

## ICT competency

While standards across the school sector appear likely to be codified in terms of wide – and extending – professional capacity, it looks likely that standards in terms of information and communications technology (ICT) will be defined in terms of 'minimum competency.' Given the ubiquitous nature of ICT as a learning tool – and that's nationally, not just in New South Wales – any ICT standards are going to bleed significantly into any other formulation of professional standards.

According to the Commonwealth-funded examination of ICT competency for school educators, *Raising the Standards*, a project undertaken by the University of Western Sydney, the Australian Curriculum Studies Association, the Australian Council for Computers in Education and the Technology Education Federation of Australia, ICT standards – or 'ICT-rich descriptors' – need to be embedded in any future non-ICT-specific professional standards. While the term 'minimum standards' may raise concern, the focus of the project appears to have been to develop standards for beginning teachers and those practising teachers who are beginning users of ICT. Notwithstanding the need for this, several promising recommendations from the project suggest the 'minimum' is a practical concern, not a fundamental priority:

- ICT standards need to address the differing needs of pre-service and beginning teachers, practitioners new to ICT, accomplished users of ICT, school leaders and teacher educators
- ICT standards need to be developed by a partnership of teacher education institutions, employers and education systems, professional associations and accreditation agencies – that sounds like a push for a coherent system
- through the collaborative mechanisms of MCEETYA, education systems and boards of studies need to embed ICT-rich student learning outcomes in all curriculum frameworks.

Beyond these recommendations that appear to be driving a national systemic approach, *Raising the Standards* is also pushing PD to the fore. According to the report, any standards developed from its ICT Competency Framework need to be used for performance management and PD purposes. That suggests some kind of program of professional review and support.

## Further education

In the further education sector, meanwhile, vocational education in schools is to be investigated by the Commonwealth's House of Representatives Education and Training Committee. The inquiry will examine the place of vocational education in schools, its growth and development, and its effectiveness in preparing students for post-school options. According to House Education Committee Chair, Kerry Bartlett, the inquiry will examine the range, structure, resourcing and delivery of vocational education programs in schools, also looking at teacher training, the impact of vocational education on other programs and the differences between school-based and other vocational education programs especially in terms of their acceptance by industry. 'Vocational education in schools is growing rapidly and we need to be sure we are maximising its potential to help our young

people,' Bartlett said. 'Vocational education is becoming important in that it opens up options for kids, makes school more relevant, and provides a pathway from school to work.' The committee will visit schools and employers in all states and is currently seeking submissions.

## Higher education

Between elections and with the hard work on literacy, numeracy and Indigenous education by the former Commonwealth Education Minister, David Kemp, bearing fruit, the present Minister, Brendan Nelson, appears to be taking the 'steady-as-she-goes' approach to school education. With SES funding still capable of triggering sharp reactions, it's no surprise if the Minister is keeping pretty quiet. Nelson's portfolio, of course, includes higher education, a major sore spot that's 'at the crossroads.' The trouble appears to be which roads the sector might take, and how many choices are available. The Department of Education, Science and Training's discussion papers so far following from 'Higher Education at the Crossroads' and aimed at prompting debate in the sector appear not to have taken things far. While some agreement has been forthcoming in terms of the need for revised funding mechanisms, just how universities might be shaped by 'specialisation' or 'diversification' remains contentious. Debate on proposed teacher standards, external monitoring, and a splitting of 'academic teaching' and 'academic research' appears to have been less than fruitful. The strongest point of agreement currently would seem to be the continued preparedness of stakeholders to debate, still making cooperative noises, but that might be because everyone's waiting to see which points of view emerge as the dominant ones – Nelson's included – from the mish-mash of ideas so far put forward.

Ask widely across any part of the education sector, however, and there's one point of agreement: the Minister listens. He also remembers your name. Whatever the outcomes, it's likely some measure of collaborative design will be involved. Good news?

## LINKS

[www.austcolled.com.au](http://www.austcolled.com.au)  
[www.curriculum.edu.au/mceetya/taskforce/taskfrc.htm](http://www.curriculum.edu.au/mceetya/taskforce/taskfrc.htm)  
[www.dest.gov.au/schools/teachingreview/default.htm](http://www.dest.gov.au/schools/teachingreview/default.htm)  
[www.dest.gov.au/schools/publications/2002/RaisingtheStandards/RaisingtheStandards.pdf](http://www.dest.gov.au/schools/publications/2002/RaisingtheStandards/RaisingtheStandards.pdf)  
 House of Representatives Education and Training Committee Secretariat, phone 02 6277 2121 or visit [www.aph.gov.au/house/committee/edt/ves/index.htm](http://www.aph.gov.au/house/committee/edt/ves/index.htm)

## Schooling the Rustbelt Kids

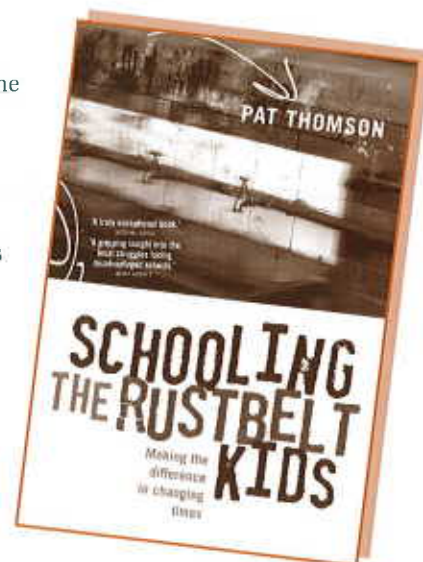
By Pat Thomson

Reviewed by Erin Shale

ISBN 1 865 086 851 RRP \$35.00

Parents and educators have long held onto the belief that a good education can help young people achieve their full potential and may literally change the course of their lives. A good education has always been enshrined as one of the great equalisers. Fact or fiction? *Schooling the Rustbelt Kids* is a salient reminder that there is still a long way to go before we can even begin to think that education is leveling the playing field for a great number of young people.

The reality, as Pat Thomson shows, is that many young people and their parents are becoming disillusioned with a system which cannot deliver all that it promises. Unacceptable numbers of young people are becoming disengaged and are dropping out of school. But schools can't do it all alone. Thomson rightly points out that, unless more support is given to families and inequalities in society as a whole are addressed, schools will continually be working against the tide. The two hypothetical children mentioned in the book, Vicki and Thanh, illustrate beautifully that when children arrive at school, they have very differing needs, expectations and family circumstances which must be addressed if each child is to derive the maximum benefit from our education system. It's disturbing and saddening to hear that many schools have insufficient funding to provide the educational experience to equip each young person with the skills, knowledge and vision to reach their full potential and walk confidently out of the school gates and into the world. Many enter at a disadvantage, and leave at a disadvantage.



I teach in a well-established and well-resourced school in a leafy suburb. Can a book which addresses issues in disadvantaged schools be of any relevance to me? Absolutely. This book is a snapshot of the realities of working and studying in a disadvantaged school and how this affects the attitudes and life chances of students. And it's a frightening picture. The book is thought-provoking reading for all teachers: it's a refreshing reminder of why we became teachers in the first place. It challenges us to refocus on the *raison d'être* of teaching – to develop the unique gifts and qualities of every student, to guide, encourage and educate all students to make the most of their lives and be happy, productive members of society. By highlighting the struggles of some schools to achieve what all teachers feel professionally and morally obliged to achieve, Thomson challenges each of us to revisit our own teaching practice, and to look beyond our individual schools and take some responsibility for the uneven playing fields facing students and educators in less advantaged settings. Thomson reminds us of the incredible

responsibility and equally incredible power of schools: the daunting yet exciting task of giving young people a positive start in life.

My school is certainly not disadvantaged. My students enjoy excellent facilities and technology-rich classrooms. But government funding is never sufficient to provide the quality educational experience we desire for the students in our care. And like teachers all around Australia, my colleagues and I work tirelessly to keep up with increasing demands and escalating workloads. It's not easy. But how much more difficult the situation is for students and staff in the disadvantaged schools Thomson describes. Those students who live in communities where there is a high level of unemployment and underemployment face a very different reality to the majority of students I teach. Thomson's book challenges us all to take some responsibility for this and to be aware of how funding and policy works in schools.

Readers are given a very detailed picture of the history of educational funding in Australia and the current situation in schools. The text is sprinkled with powerful stories from principals who relate their daily experiences in disadvantaged schools. Thomson also provides very practical and enriching discussion points around issues and policy frameworks for the future. The chapter, 'Doing Justice,' and the Appendix are a rich resource of questions all schools would benefit greatly from revisiting.

In this age of increasing competition and uncertainty, we should all be working to ensure that schools are in a strong position to prepare students to face challenges and potential setbacks with optimism and confidence. Perhaps it's a utopian thought that we can level the playing field by ensuring that all schools are adequately funded and resourced, but if educators and those responsible for funding education lose their idealism,

what right do we have to expect our young people to be idealistic?

It is impossible to walk away from Thomson's book without feeling a sense of frustration at the situation facing some young people in our schools. Says Thomson: 'I cling to imaginings

of a more just school system. The ongoing challenge is how to move from where we are to a more equitable and civil society.' The young people in our schools are the reality we must daily nurture and encourage. For their sake we must dream of the day when our school system is a just system for all.

## Leadership for Learning How to help teachers succeed

By Carl Glickman

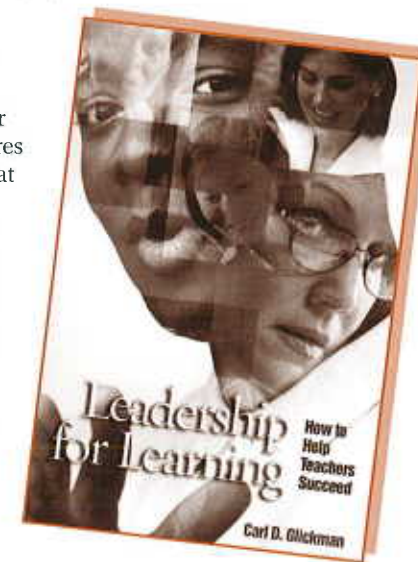
Reviewed by Steve Holden

Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development,  
distributed by Curriculum Corporation

ISBN 0 871 205 963 RRP \$36.00

Anyone in school leadership will be familiar with calls for the development of structures and processes in schools that improve teaching and promote lifelong learning, and many keep a watchful eye on the busy geography of practical projects, programs and discussions across Australia that are building those structures and processes. Some have seen the policy statements, embraced the motherhood statements and wondered when and how they might move on beyond the rhetoric. Yes of course we want to improve teaching and promote lifelong learning: let's get on with it.

Part of the problem with 'improvement' – school improvement, classroom teaching, lifelong, lifewide learning – is that while the educational discourse in Australia does develop, does move from the analytical and theoretical to policy to the practicalities of implementation, practising educators might miss it, or might come in to the discourse at particular points that make it seem as though things haven't budged since the last motherhood statement. What's needed, from time to time, are educators from or close to the educational enterprise to



summarise that discourse in some way. This is what Carl Glickman does in *Leadership for Learning*. As he puts it, 'What could I say to teachers, principals, supervisors, and other school leaders about improving classroom teaching and learning that hadn't already been said? But then it occurred to me that, indeed, there was a better and more concise way to understand the approaches, structures and practical applications of leadership for continuous improvement of classroom teaching and learning *within the context of whole-school improvement*.'

In *Leadership for Learning*, he considers processes for improvement in ways that many school-based educators will read

Erin Shale is a Careers Counsellor and teacher at Balwyn High School, Melbourne, with a research and post-graduate background in adolescent health. She edited *Inside Out* (Bookman Press, 1999). Her latest book is *Adolescence: A guide for parents*, co-written with Michael Carr-Gregg (Finch, 2002).

with relief, not merely because they might adopt many of the frameworks, models, approaches and proformas provided, and there's plenty offered, but because Glickman writes from an understanding of the actual conditions of school life. When you have school-wide responsibilities and you know you won't even see some of your staff for days or weeks, who's kidding whom when the talk is about innovation, new learning and classroom- and school-improvement?

Hopefully, much of Glickman's material will already be familiar to many; some of it might be new and might prove useful; and, as Glickman says, 'much of what has been outlined in this book probably is already taking place.' Regardless, this is a book that provides a sure benefit by bringing together otherwise disparate material. With a wealth of 'should do' material already published, it moves on sensibly to outline what educators 'can do' – and actually are doing.

My one quibble is with the rhetoric of 'continuous improvement,' something about the onwads and upwards stridency of the concept. This is not to do with Glickman's book, but with the idea that things can and should always be getting better and better. Perhaps, like the Olympics, it's no bad thing for teachers to aim higher. I'm just not sure how many records can be broken.

Is there room in Australian publishing for a book like this? I would think so. Given the role of the Curriculum Corporation is the 'access all areas' provision of educational support, it's heartening in the meantime to see it distributing this book.

Contact [sales@curriculum.edu.au](mailto:sales@curriculum.edu.au)

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*Thomson challenges each of us to revisit our own teaching practice, and to look beyond our individual schools and take some responsibility for the uneven playing fields facing students and educators in less advantaged settings.*

# Schools and the law

## Current and emergent issues

**Douglas Stewart and Andrew Knott** survey decided legal cases that have a bearing on school programs and consider some of the emerging issues that are likely to affect Australian educators.

Despite a comparatively low level of litigation in Australia impacting on schools, there is an increasing willingness to seek legal redress for alleged harms. While in past years litigation was largely to do with the physical welfare of students and mainly on school grounds, today there are many other circumstances in which actions against schools and educators have been, or are likely to be, initiated.

Before addressing specific areas it is useful to revisit some fundamental legal concepts that may demystify aspects of law that impact on school policies and procedures, the main area of importance to school staff being torts

A tort is a civil wrong and

examples include nuisance, defamation and – the one we are most concerned with – negligence in which a plaintiff has to demonstrate that she or he was owed a duty of care, the duty of care was breached and some harm to the plaintiff was caused as a direct result of the breach.

Negligence is the action most usually faced in the school setting. It also has the reputation of being one of the fastest growing of the torts. In essence, actions in negligence revolve around a plaintiff alleging that she or he has been harmed in some way and that this has been occasioned by the act, or a failure to act, of someone else. In schools this is most often a teacher or a school administrator, but may be the school authority (like the School Board or Council) or even the education system (like the Catholic Education Office or Education Queensland). (See, for example: *Geyer v Downs*; *Commonwealth v Introvigne*).

### Current issues

Most cases are to do with: classrooms; school grounds; travel to and from school; sport; and excursions. It is wise to remember that the duty of care owed has been held to extend beyond the school grounds and out of normal school hours. These areas may be illustrated by the following list of cases decided in Australian courts.

#### Classrooms

*Richards v State of Victoria* (classroom fight – inadequate supervision); *Barker v State of South Australia* (absence of teacher and fall from chair); *Gray v State of New South Wales* (lack of adequate supervision in a demountable during lunch

recess); *Bartley v Haines* (making volcanos – lack of supervision); *State of New South Wales v Moss* (extracting fat from sausages). Other classroom decisions have been to do with injuries incurred from: paper pellets; catapults; general failure to supervise. A failure to provide adequate supervision is a common element in many of the cases determined in the courts.

#### School grounds

*Geyer v Downs* (baseball bat injury before school – no rostered supervision); *Commonwealth v Introvigne* (flagpole injury before school – minimal supervision). Other decisions have been to do with: placing students in danger; failure to get to class on time; failure to adequately supervise known bullies.

#### Travel to and from school

*Reynolds v Haines* (muck up day); *Trustees of the Roman Catholic Church for the Diocese of Bathurst v Koffman* (waiting

for public transport); *Horne v State of Queensland* (travelling to sports venue). Decisions here indicate that a duty of care is owed to students who are on their way to or returning home from school. This will only apply when the school knows or ought to know of hazards facing children on their normal route and does nothing to avert the dangers. However, there will need to be a close physical connection with the school and it will need to be clearly shown that the school has knowledge of the danger and should have taken some action in relation to it.

#### Sport

*Watson v Haines* (league scrum collapse); *Nally v McWilliam* (physical education activity); *Kretschmar v State of Queensland* (impaired students in classroom activity); *Duncan v Trustees for the Roman Catholic Church of Canberra and Goulbourn* (physical education and handstand demonstrations); *Gray v State of Queensland* (interschool game of league). Other decisions have largely been to do with: supervision; inadequate or inappropriate sports equipment; skill levels and inappropriate placement of students.

#### Excursions

*Ayoub v Downs* (farm excursion); *Nicholas v Osborne* (camping and bushwalking); *Beck v State*

of New South Wales (student teacher injured while assisting an excursion). Other decisions have been to do with improper decisions and inadequate supervision.

### Emergent issues

#### Students' rights

While there is no specific, overall legislation to do with children's rights, there is a raft of legislation now appearing in relation to Child Protection. Increasingly, tribunals will be used to identify and establish student rights in matters to do with access to various curriculum offerings, alternative programs, school and class regulations and discipline. Possibly the issue of greatest importance in every school is that in all dealings with students principles of justice and due process need to be followed.

#### Educational malpractice

While policy grounds and principles of sovereign immunity have prevented cases in defective educational practice succeeding in the USA, recent British decisions to do with intellectual harm have established as a matter of principle that such harm resulting from defective educational practice may result in awards of damages. Australian courts when dealing with such cases will likely follow the reasoning of the UK and this necessitates administrators having very clear policies and practices in place in their schools to reduce their exposure to this most worrying area of concern.

#### The internet

The issues of greatest importance are to do with privacy, bullying via chat boards, exposure to pornography, email abuse, copyright and defamation. Note that in relation to privacy new Commonwealth provisions necessitate private schools ensuring that appropriate systems are implemented in relation to the collection, storage and dissemination of personal information. The following safety tips are adapted from US FBI advice for parents:

- ensure students do not give out personal information

## How has the changing legal landscape affected schools?

**Lynne Symons**

Occupational Health and Safety is a major concern, especially in relation to accidents with Tech Studies machinery. Thank God I have not had a major one, but I get to the stage I envy those schools without Tech studies equipment! Only last week we received an urgent directive from WorkCover stating that all lathes of a certain type were to be locked down immediately whilst significant repairs occurred. Of course we had them! And of course they were being used by senior students in the last weeks of assessment! So I instructed my Tech folk to disconnect the machines, get the quote for needed changes, and try and work out what the students would do in lieu of this part of their course both in that week, and as it turned out longer, because of course the repairs to our machines are not simple and the cost appears prohibitive – as the man said, better off just to buy new ones – at \$10,000 each. The guts of it to me is that in all cases I do see the need to respond promptly and with the absolute priority being the safety and well being of the children and our staff. However, I feel that I am told to just do it, and the necessary supports are not there or I have to engage on another series of endless talkfests to try and get them! And increasingly I am afraid: would I get the legal back up if something did really go wrong?

*Lynne Symons is the Principal, Ocean View College, South Australia.*

- supervise students accessing on-line activities
- ensure students accessing discussion groups are supervised
- reinforce the practice of students not responding to obscene online messages
- have students report obscene or distasteful on-line material
- emphasise healthy aspects of on-line activities with students and avoid topics like bomb making
- discuss responsibilities with students in an open and frank manner which examines the importance for individuals as well as the school in maintaining proper procedures.

#### Inclusion of special-needs students

Determined cases indicate the main inclusion issues are to do with enrolment, assessment, inclusion in school activities, exclusion from school and resources. While 'unjustifiable hardship' may be claimed as a basis for justifying discrimination, anti-discrimination tribunals have rigorously examined the concept. Anti-discrimination cases have been determined

*Possibly the issue of greatest importance in every school is that in all dealings with students principles of justice and due process need to be followed.*



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**Pru Francis**

As a teenager I remember the adventure of travelling to a youth camp in a furniture van. This method of transport was common for scout, guide, church and sports groups. Today, our school community takes seriously the issue of student transport: the safety of students and staff is a priority. While the provision of seat belts on school buses does not form part of current legislation, seat belts were considered essential when the Parents and Friends purchased our school bus in 2000. While those driving a school bus are subject to particular licensing requirements, all buses and their operators in Tasmania are now subject to rigorous and expensive accreditation requirements. We were happy to participate in this process, to satisfy ourselves that we had explored every avenue to ensure safety while using the bus and to give a sense of confidence to parents that the school has done everything possible to ensure the safety of their children while travelling with us.

*Pru Francis is the Principal at John Paul II School, Clarence Plains, Tasmania.*

*Australian courts will likely follow the US Supreme Court reasoning in a recent decision dealing with a sex abuse case that upheld the principle that 'no student has to run a gauntlet of abuse in return for the privilege of being allowed to obtain an education.'*

under Commonwealth or State Anti-Discrimination legislation. In most of the relevant statutes provision is made for direct and indirect discrimination. The central issues in these cases were to do with:

- appropriate assessment of the student so that adequate educational provision can be made
- enrolment processes and access to full curricula and extra-curricula activities
- consideration of the interests of all parties – the student, parents and other students in the class and school
- claims of unjustifiable hardship by a school will be closely examined by the courts.

To ensure best practice:

- have a clear knowledge of the provisions of the relevant anti-discrimination legislation
- ensure your school has appropriate and adequate systems in place to manage students with special needs
- ensure staff are appropriately trained in meeting the requirements of students with special needs
- manage special-needs students on the basis of their learning differences and not on their personal differences

- ensure just and fair dealing procedures in all matters to do with students with special needs.

### Sexual abuse, harassment and bullying

Educators will be well aware of sexual abuse, harassment, and bullying incidents appearing almost daily in the media. To ensure the school's legal protection, systems must be in place that prevent a hostile learning environment. Legal protection is enhanced where such systems – policies and procedures – are in place, enforced and frequently monitored in the school. Note in particular the need to ensure adequate measures are in place to identify and manage peer sexual harassment. The need for such systems is emphasised by a growing body of research that indicates a definite link between sexual abuse, bullying and harassment and suicide as well as other forms of self harm and suicidal ideation.

Australian courts will likely follow the US Supreme Court reasoning in a recent decision dealing with a sex abuse case that upheld the principle that 'no student has to run a gauntlet of abuse in return for the privilege of being allowed to obtain an education.'

Note though that the law is very sensible on the lawfulness of physical contacts. There is no doubt that the law recognises the lawfulness of a wide range of physical contacts necessary for control, restraint, management and pedagogical purposes. The Queensland Court of Appeal in *Houran v Ferguson* has clearly stated that, as teaching is a tactile profession, other touching of students by way of consolation, encouragement or rapport is also quite lawful if reasonable in degree, not improperly motivated and not objected to by the student. Whether such contexts are prudent because of

the risk of misrepresentation is, of course, a matter requiring careful consideration by teachers. It is also worth noting that the school has authority to dismiss staff if they fail to follow directions regarding school policy on touching where the failure is sufficiently serious.

### Non-delegable duty of care

An issue of considerable importance for all education authorities is to do with their non-delegable duty of care that, in some circumstances, is owed to students directly by the authority. While the normal duty is to take reasonable care for the welfare of students, the High Court has held that a school authority, *per se*, has a duty to ensure that reasonable care of students is taken. In effect, this requires something more than the normal duty of care: in the case of school children, the State has taken responsibility for the welfare of students during the time they are in the school's care. This is different from the principle of vicarious liability where the employer is responsible for the negligent actions of its employees.

### Preventive risk management

Risk management involves sound planning; effective decision-making; accepting known risks; reducing possibilities of occurrence or consequences of harmful events; and mitigating adverse effects of unavoidable events. All schools should have risk management plans to cover activities where students are involved. Such a plan should: set objectives; identify hazards; assess risks; decide on control measures; implement control measures; and monitor and review the process.

### LINKS

[www.victorialaw.org.au](http://www.victorialaw.org.au) and go to Legal Links.

[www.lawfoundation.net.au](http://www.lawfoundation.net.au) and go to Helpful Links.

[www.austlii.edu.au](http://www.austlii.edu.au)

Douglas Stewart is a Senior Lecturer in the School of Learning and Professional Studies at the Queensland University of Technology, Brisbane. His latest publication is *Schools, Courts and the Law*, published by Prentice Hall, with Andrew Knott. Andrew Knott is a senior partner with Macrossans Lawyers, Brisbane.

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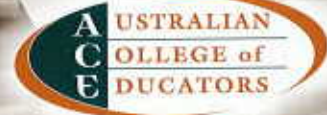
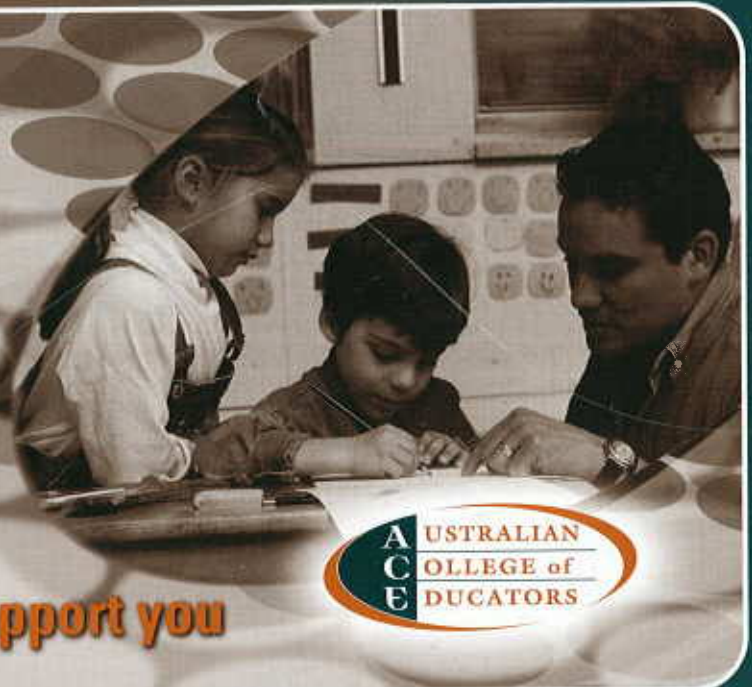
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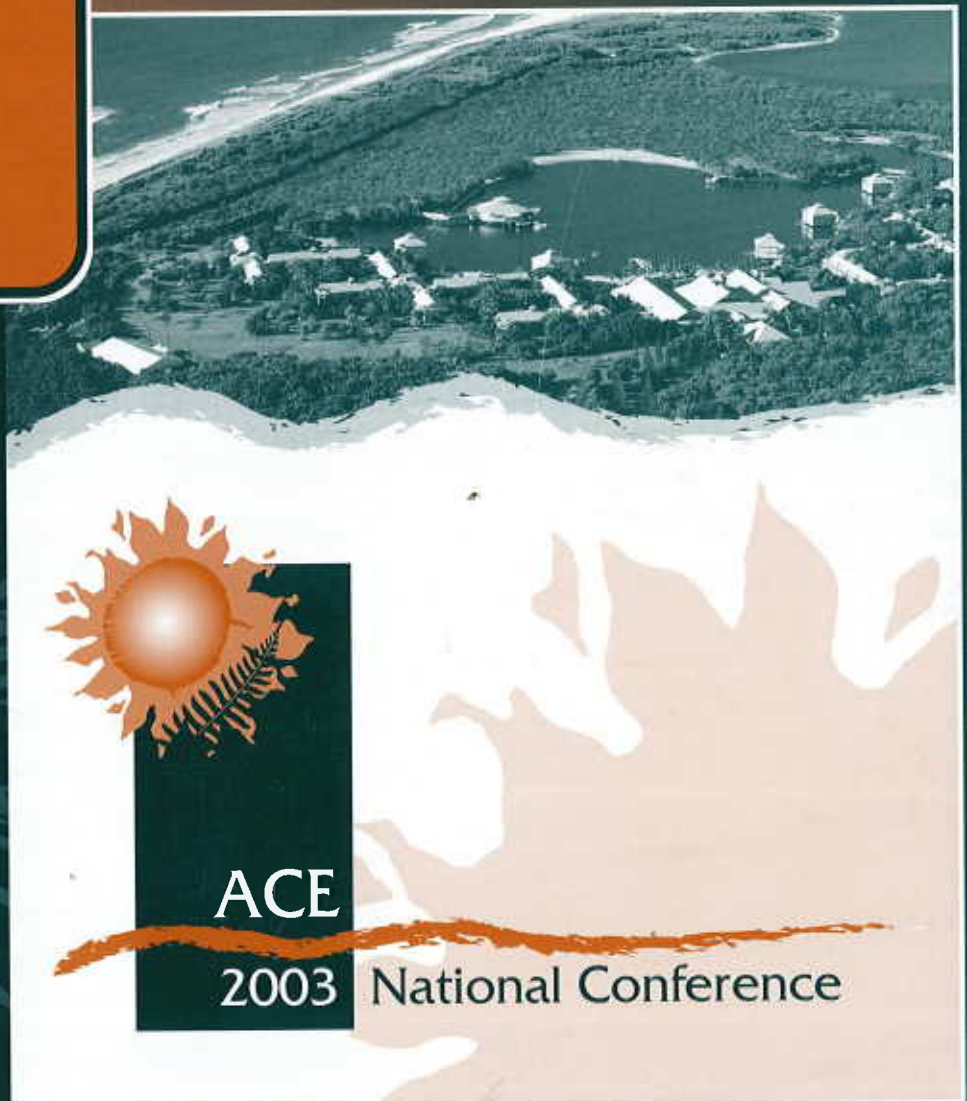
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