

INTRODUCTION

This study is the result of an on-going four year project within a Melbourne school district. The study has provided a rich source for evaluating school-centered leadership within a context of centralised Government 'guidelines' for schooling, and pressures toward linking 'training' with industrial award restructuring. Insights were gained on staff differences in autonomy and collaboration, the ability of a school council to develop curriculum and program policy, whether local educational needs can be balanced with the demands of centralised Government 'guidelines', the role of parents and students in school council decision making, and how important knowledge is defined within a school and its community. The purpose of this school project was to develop school educational goals in order to set out long term, sustainable, and achievable objectives for the school and local community. The project sought to establish what was an acceptable balance between the demands of central curriculum 'guidelines' and maintenance of local needs. Contained within this project was an assumption concerning the relationship between political powerlessness in the broadest sense and school failure.

It will be argued that one example of the application of political power is the influence a school and community has over school policy and practice. In turn, school policy and practice are themselves crucial determinants of school performance. This is particularly important for school communities populated by economically disadvantaged students, especially in present times when the economy is unable to employ a large percentage of its youth. (At time of writing the unemployment rate for teenagers who have left education was thirty-six percent.)

For several decades, certainly since the 1970's, efforts to redress school failure usually fell into one or two main forms: repairing alleged deficits or changing school culture and structures. This was done through adopting forms of compensatory education in the former, and models of effective schooling in the latter. This school project chose not to adopt specifically either of these approaches instead, the school chose to frame its curriculum policy and process within a democratic ethos that paid attention to public responsibility, personal insights and democratic tolerance. However, it was a model that did set out to

change school culture and structures, and did extend aspects of what has been defined as successful aspects of effective schooling.

There is a continuing struggle internal to government schooling in Victoria as schools attempt to balance the demands of centralised curriculum 'guidelines' and the educational needs of a local community. This particular school and community argued that the diversity, abilities, interests and social needs of its students were not identified or dealt with in any public policy document at years 11-12. Years 7-10 curriculum is ignored by the concentration of concern at the senior years. There is a kind of trickle down assumption that the academic, social and personal needs of students years 7-10 will be covered by the 11-12 curricula. The school in this study is a comprehensive school with the usual spread of social and gender backgrounds, ethnicity and languages associated with inner urban schooling. School failure and success, school enjoyment or non-enjoyment are central concerns to parents, students and teachers alike. Any movement toward intervening in existing government policy, to add or contribute to policy development, would be considered as an exercise in the application of political power. It was also an exercise in cultural renewal, that is, a movement toward the development of a more collaborative school culture.

Any staff development program or change in school policy should be undertaken on the basis that it aims to bring about significant changes in student learning and commitment to learning. Inside the macro-political arena of parent/school intervention, is the micro political domain of the empowerment of students measured by higher levels of achievement in academic skills, personal and social domains.

WHY INTERVENTION AT SCHOOL LEVEL

Some general, and necessarily incomplete observations need to be made about the changing nature of schooling at years 11-12, and the changing work and social roles for students. What is being observed at years 11-12 is the loss of student commitment to the general school culture and activities, and a strong movement toward disciplined and continuous work assessment that encourages possessive and competitive individualism. The press for senior students is toward the formation of informal personal and social

groupings and a resistance toward school administered symbols. These laissez-faire student social groupings (especially within senior colleges) have become marginal to general learning needs, except for the subject based work requirements of the senior curriculum. Forms of play, sport, performance activities and school decision making participation are declining choices within the more formal structuring of senior school curriculum. The increased formalising of work at senior school level is in tension with very high youth unemployment, an inflation in scores required for tertiary entrance, and a significant increase in senior school retention rates. Of more recent interest in this complicated interaction between the economy, school and society, is the very significant increase in student suspension rates in years 6 and 12. The

overall weighting is still within years 7-10, however, these newer trends raise interesting and to be worked through questions.

SCHOOL SUSPENSIONS

	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989
1990	1991				
P-6 =	225	243	221	221	309
518					
7-10 =	4434	5368	6113	7776	8841
9485					
11-12=	342	478	674	930	957
1111					
TOTAL	5040	6130	7049	8202	9390
	16182				11207

Victorian Department of
School Education, 1992.

Retention rates in state schools have risen dramatically during 1985-1991, however, the actual number of students have not. It would appear from tentative findings that the majority of suspensions in years 11-12 are in the larger secondary schools (1000-1200 students), 'misconduct' was most cited reason for suspension. Slattery, (92:3). It should also be noted that preparatory and grade one students are now on the suspension list with suspensions for grade 6 doubling over the six year period. All these trends raise questions regarding the emerging general learning culture of schools and

the implications for Year ten as an important transition period within the 7-12 curriculum.

In general, both teacher and student work has changed dramatically at V.C.E. level as new forms of assessment and surveillance demand very large commitments of time. Teacher relationships within the school both professional and personal are changing within these newer demands for accountability and efficiency. To avoid an overall school curriculum being decided by the demands of strong senior subject 'guidelines', a school and its community will need to deliberately intervene in this process and balance centralised demands with the educational needs of its local community.

YEAR 10: THE NEW STRESS POINT

Year 10 is now the stress point in schools, caught between an economy that cannot hire its young, changing credentialling demands, and youth cultures demanding loyalty. In general the 7-10 curriculum is formless in content and direction. Year 10 is being seen increasingly as a pre-V.C.E. year, that is, the language of the work assignment and assessment ritual is being adopted.

Where there have been attempts to construct 7-10 curriculum policy, they fall in the main between a pastorally oriented program, or a mix of subjects from the old technical and high school curriculum. What we have ended up with is a mix described as a 'shopping mall curriculum', centered around 'choice, variety and neutrality'. This kind of curriculum mirrors the market place and is generally devoid of intellectual and cultural challenge. Given this confusion in general purpose it should come as no surprise that students react to such perceived lack of purpose and responsibility with acts of wilfulness and a refusal to be coerced. Youth sub-cultural activities offer strong pulls for allegiance if there is no school culture offering a strong sense of belonging, usefulness and competence. Willis (1990)

My own concern about the forming of 7-10 curriculum via the trickle down from the V.C.E., is that the 'clever country' concerns of the newer vocational schooling movement will find schools concerned with efficiency and productivity and with little time for social, cultural or personal concerns. What is missing from a narrow emphasis on market place skills (as ends in themselves) is the possibility of developing a curriculum that questions what is necessary to encourage students as

responsible participants in a stronger version of a cultural and political democracy.

If in the future there is a powerful shift of employment and training to be associated with education, then we run the risk of producing hard working, self-absorbed students committed to forms of narrow, self-isolating competitive individualism. The 'clever' nation may well produce competent workers, but not necessarily full citizens. The question of the kind of world we want to live in, and whether we have an education to deal with complexities, or to act as functionaries, is part of this equation.

Recently, the concept of 'choice' has emerged from conservative quarters in the form of a single organising principle for schooling. This argument holds to the privatization of public schooling and to defining the student as consumer of knowledge and schooling rather than as producer.

The challenge for the school in this study (Duke Park) and community, was to construct a broad and balanced curriculum within and across the demands of previously outlined pressures, and the demands of a senior subject - specialist curriculum. Detailed examination of the decision making process, the role of parents, teachers and students can be found in Knight (1992a, 1992b, 1993c).

However, the most critical phase in this school process of decision making, was how an inner urban secondary school (Duke Park) intervened deliberately into a specific political context. There was a general agreement from parents, staff and students to organise all school activities toward compliance with mutually agreed upon aims.

The Duke Park curriculum policy has agreed upon, long term, sustainable and achievable goals of education that are more detailed and ambitious than either the compensatory or effective school models. In this particular school model every student, through the curriculum, was to be provided with sufficient knowledge to enable each to be an informed participant in debate about policies concerned with, for example, world peace, overcoming poverty, resolving urban and race tension, participating in democratic decision making, preserving the liveability of the environment, defining

and achieving ethnic, gender and racial equality. The effective school curriculum tends towards adult authority to solve problems of social-economic inequality, the democratic school aims to draw students into the centre of the study of the problem, proposing solutions and acting upon those proposals. The central premise is that all students are taught that they are responsible for solving both their own and wider social problems, in consultation and debate with others, and the schools obligation is to provide the opportunity to develop knowledge for solving important issues. Otherwise, some unspecified 'others' are left to resolve issues on their behalf.

The premise underwriting this statement argues that a 'distinctive virtue' of a democratic society is that it requires its citizens to actively influence how their society reproduces itself. This requires both the education for, and experience in, the development of a deliberative democratic character. This emphasis on the moral development of students aims to persuade students toward a change in the definition of self, from a less self-centered person to a more citizen centered individual. This was a deliberate effort to define worthwhile knowledge within the context of generalised and democratic education directed toward a whole society not just one sector within. Conceptual guidance for construction of this curriculum model was influenced by: Knight (1985) Gilligan et al (1990) Davie (1986) Giroux (1988) White (1983, 1983a) Pearl (1972) Dahl (1989) Bowers (1984) Slee (1988) Pusey (1991) Gutman (1987) Ericson et al (1990) Hargreaves (1989) Crittenden (1988) Claydon (1975) Jones et al (1982) Claydon et al (1977)

GENERAL PRINCIPLES

The educational goals were decided upon after lengthy, and vigorous negotiations, a set of three general principles provided guidance:

1. VISION

THAT STUDENTS GO TO SCHOOL TO INVENT A FUTURE.
A FUNCTION OF CURRICULA IS TO EXTEND THE IMAGINATION OF STUDENTS IN ORDER TO PLAN FOR A FUTURE THAT IS JUST, HUMANE AND DEMOCRATIC.
SUCH A GOAL REQUIRES THE SCHOOL TO BE INTEGRATIVE, MULTI-DISCIPLINARY AND ACTION-ORIENTED.

2. KNOWLEDGE

THAT IN ORDER TO ACHIEVE THIS, A BASE OF KNOWLEDGE NEEDS TO BE TAUGHT THAT WILL INDUCT STUDENTS INTO A CULTURES SYSTEMATIC BODIES OF BELIEFS AND VALUES AND THEIR RELATED CAPACITIES FOR CREATIVITY, SELF-REFLECTION, INTER-PERSONAL SKILLS, SOCIAL AND POLITICAL ANALYSIS.

3. EMPOWERMENT

THAT STUDENTS NEED TO DEVELOP A THEORY OF SOCIAL AND PHYSICAL CAUSALITY. THIS INCLUDES ANALYSIS OF THE EFFECT OF HUMAN ACTIVITY ON THE ENVIRONMENT, AND THEIR OWN ROLE IN THE SOCIAL CONTEXT. THIS IS DONE IN ORDER THAT STUDENTS HAVE A SENSE OF SELF AS CONNECTING TO THE WORLD, WHICH REQUIRES A KNOWLEDGE OF WHO AND WHAT CONTROLS EVENTS IN THE WORLD

For complete school policy on educational goals see Appendix I.

ESTABLISHING SEQUENCE AND INTEGRATION

General Framework

(a)Purpose: Long term, sustainable and achievable objectives

(b)Challenge: Integrating Disciplines - Establishing sequences within a democratic ethos.

TEACHING AREAS, i.e. humanities, mathematics, science, languages,
physical culture, arts, that can be applied

to

the following personal and social aims.

1.

PERSONAL
AIMS

SOCIAL
AIMS

2.

- Moving from local to state to international issues
- Connecting issues and historical relationships:

ie, gender, class, race

- Movement toward (G.1-12):
 - economic literacy
 - cultural and historical understanding
 - political participation
- Schools allow students to test validity of their ideas in debate and social practice.

BOTTOM UP OR TOP DOWN REFORM

An interesting observation from this study regards the causal direction of school reform. In democratic schooling accountability goes top down - the ultimate determination is made by the student. Being accountable downward is defending with logic and evidence all requests made of students - to students. In a democratic school accountability is negotiated, that is, the central authority needs to persuade those being educated of the value of the curriculum, the class organisation, and the evaluation. If the case presented does not prove to be persuasive there is power in the school council and local constituencies to change the school program or evaluation criteria. The bottom up model favoured by Ball (1987) in his study of U.K. schooling reform, and Cuban (1984) in his study of U.S. schools, are similar in direction to the effective schools movement - they tend to also argue for 'bottom up' reform. While the 'bottom up' model gives the impression of being egalitarian, this is not necessarily the case in practice. The model holds teachers and students most accountable to higher forms of authority or bureaucracy, it is seldom the case in reverse.

The top-down form of democratic schooling being advocated is not easy on teachers. The strength of the model is contained in the quality of the arguments between student and teacher. Participation between student and teacher is intended to bring about a change in the definition of self, from a less self-centered person to a more citizen centered person. Teachers are required to be accountable and to explain what they are teaching, and why it is important knowledge for students to understand.

Connecting to long term and sequentially organised educational aims is critical to this relationship and teaching.

LESSONS LEARNT

There was a shift in power relations between teacher, student and parent needs, and government guidelines within this school study. The school and its constituents were able to establish an acceptable balance between the demands of Government policy 'guidelines' and local needs. The school was able to intervene in the question as to whether it was to be viewed on one hand as an 'instrument of economic advancement', or whether it was to be defined distinctively as an agent of education.

Present educational debates in Australian education reflect an unresolved tension in the inter-relationship between the economy, society and education. Reports by Finn (1992), Deveson (1992) and Mayer (1992) reflect a recent move to competency-based standards for various levels of schooling. They are essentially a narrow skills-measurement approach to schooling, linked to industrial awards, but minus the necessary intellectual content of a more educational approach to schooling. None of the reports address the central problem of an economy that cannot employ a large percentage of its youth, and how new forms of employment can be created. Schools, students and teachers are being made to bear the brunt directly of this unresolved public dilemma.

This school addressed 'competency' in broad and specific terms and defined general education within a democratic public philosophy in which there was a conscious striving to organise all school activities toward compliance with mutually agreed upon goals. The school in this model argued that the curriculum is a necessary ingredient in the development of responsible and informed citizens. Citizenship arts are to be encouraged in this model. Democratic education as defined was to be the application of particular principles in every identifiable school activity.

The democratic school curriculum decided upon is linked to larger complexly inter-related social and community issues - the shape of the political economy, the condition of the environment, the lingering conditions of tribal, race and ethnic hatred, social domination, the use and misuse of technology and the

changing face of international relations. These issues are to be drawn into the centre of school and classroom debate, school subjects can be entered through these social issues, and students can be empowered to test the validity of their ideas through program practice and debate.

The emphasis on democratic schooling demonstrates the willingness of the school to accept some responsibility for the condition of the community. It stands in contrast to the more passive forms of compensatory, pastoral or effective schooling in currency.

In the democratic model, students and teachers learn to become democratic citizens by confronting increasingly complicated and difficult problems. Democratic schooling, thus, attempts to provide developmentally the experiences for everyone to gain a critical perspective, and to encourage students toward constructing a vision for a just, humane and democratic future.

The proposition emerging from this study, is that if schools are to take an active part in defining their local community, then, teachers, parents, and students must be able to shape and reshape policies to gain a balance between centralised demands and local community needs.

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SEMINAR

INTEGRATION OF
STUDENTS INTO REGULAR SCHOOLS

PAPER PRESENTED:

CURRICULUM INTEGRATION:
BALANCING LOCAL AND
CENTRAL POLICY

Tony Knight
School of Education
La Trobe University
Melbourne, 3083

APPENDIX I

DUKE PARK SECONDARY COLLEGE

SCHOOL POLICY

EDUCATIONAL GOALS

LEVELS OF PLANNING

The Duke Park College educational goals are organised within four planning levels of curriculum:

1. Intellectual aims
defined as definitions of worthwhile knowledge and understanding.
2. Skill aims
defined as techniques of knowing how to achieve skills, competence, dexterity and abilities.
3. Personal aims
defined as forms of personal skill, understanding, and responsibility.
4. Social aims
defined as forms of community competence and responsibility.

General Curriculum Aims

1. Intellectual aims ...Content.

Education for economic literacy and choice of life career.

This would include a knowledge of how to enter the Economic world, a knowledge of career perspectives and a knowledge of economics and politics.

Education for responsible analysis and decision making.

This includes active learning to be a democratic and responsible citizen, and an understanding that school rights carry personal responsibilities.

Education for cultural understanding and participation.

This requires a sense of history as to cultural contributions made by gender, ethnicity, race and social class - culture as a unifying experience. Students as inventors of culture.

Education for inter-intra personal competence.

This requires at least an understanding of how to live with self and others in non-exploitative and non-manipulative relationships. How to live without dependence on drugs or alcohol.

Education for participatory and healthy leisure.

This requires a knowledge of self-sufficiency, skills and enjoyment in personal leisure and participatory sport. An understanding of the place of leisure in contemporary society and its relationship with youth.

Curriculum Implementation

Integrated Curriculum (7-10)

Nine areas of learning listed in VCE (11-12)

Teaching strategies: i.e. Enquiry based - linking subjects with Economic, Political, Cultural, Personal and Environmental understanding.

The College will draw from a variety of teaching models and methods that include differing emphases on both cognitive and affective domains and the academic, social, behavioural and

personal areas of learning.

A problem solving approach ought to be used in programs where possible. Programs will encourage students to use a wide variety of resources and to work cooperatively in solving problems.

Students will also be taught and be encouraged to demonstrate strategies for independent and flexible learning. With each area of learning a major program goal will be to train students in the independent use of relevant resources.

Programs will be structured to give students practice in using the range of resources strategies to complete specific tasks. Homework will be used as a preparation and consolidation of classwork.

Each task and skill should fit into larger context of society and human values.

General Curriculum Aims

2. Skills

Use of language(s)
Numerical techniques
Physical performance
Arts-based competence
Technical skills

Students must be able to think logically and critically so that they bring order to a mass of facts and information, select wisely and make responsible social and personal decisions.

3. Personal Aims

To work toward the application of knowledge and on one's own situation in work, politics, culture and leisure.

To develop the ability for critical self-evaluation of beliefs and attitudes in one's own life.

Provide opportunity for every student to participate in decisions that affect his or her life.

To guarantee rights for teachers, parents and students of expression, privacy, due process.

To increase students' sense of self-esteem and confidence by being active learners and participants.

Curriculum Implementation

All areas of learning will provide students with opportunities to:
evaluate arguments, interpret statistical data, sensibly interpret natural phenomena and be able to apply problem solving techniques to practical situations. Students will be required to explain and justify their opinions and recognise the rationale behind other opinions. An extension of these skills would enable students to develop the notion of generalisability of skills or use of information beyond mastery of technique.

Foster understanding of the different languages and cultural traditions that comprise our society.

Provide equal encouragement of each work unit students will reflect on goals and complete a self-evaluation to ascertain whether goals have been achieved and to identify strengths and weaknesses. This will be done in conjunction with teacher assessment.

Each area of learning will include opportunities for all students to practice a variety of means of expression: these may include written and oral work, public speaking, logical instruction, art forms, performing, model making.
Choice and coaching in competitive sport competition - intra-inter school.

Development of school/class structures that facilitate decision making for students.

Respect for the rights of others through historical and cultural understanding: race, class, gender, ethnicity.

Inservice to reduce sex-stereotyping of career choice for students and to avoid narrow definitions of student ability.

General Curriculum Aims

4. Social Aims

Development of a deliberative democratic character in students.

To define the knowledge and experience necessary to solve critical issues facing society.

Participation in community and school decision making activities.

Developing an understanding of how diverse environments function, analysing the effect of human activity, and the role of conservation in their management.

Testing ideas - finding solutions - enjoying school.

Curriculum Implementation

Provide equal encouragement for all students and teachers to experiment, take risks and learn to construct knowledge from experience.

School programs will provide opportunities for students to present opinions and consider the views of other members of the community. Curriculum activities will include invitations to guests to participate at the school and all students will have curriculum experience outside the school in the wider environment.

The program at Mirimbah (out-door education camp) will continue to introduce students to leadership, survival bushcraft experiences, which are designed to challenge them and increase their

self confidence. Environmental education would include practice in recycling, environmental energy conservation and understanding local ecology.

School projects can be linked with school aims
i.e.
recreation/health aides,
oral history projects - connecting history and local community,
students as tutors,
education/work experience,
action research projects,

parent - student programs,
youth service teams,
music / media / theatre programs,
school governance participation,
youth consultation teams,
home group exploration of issues,
re-cycling projects.