

ALTERNATIVE FORMS OF WORK
ORGANISATION
The Case of KIDS Open Learning School

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BACKGROUND

Over the last decade, Australia's economy has been placed under increasing pressure to become more internationally competitive. All industries have been asked to help our country lift its level of productivity. For education, this means raising the standard of learning so that students will be more skilful when they enter the workforce. Achieving that goal is not without its problems.

Several years ago, Dean Ashenden (1990) identified a major obstacle to raising the 'productivity of learning' within the 'education industry'. In his view, the work of teachers is badly designed. Teachers are required to do too many things that are not really teaching and much of their time is frittered away on low level, routine tasks that can be done by less qualified

people. Spending more money to solve the problem is out of the question because people will not sanction tax increases. To increase the 'productivity of learning' within the existing allocation of funds, Ashenden suggests reducing the number of qualified teachers and employing a larger number of other types of adult education workers, at a cheaper rate, to carry out these routine tasks. The increase in teacher/pupil ratios, he says, can be offset by new and better use of:

learning groups - for example, small group work, peer and cross-age tutoring, student managed learning groups;

technology - for example, computers, distance education packages, sequenced learning programs; and

pedagogy - for example, goal/work based assessment, negotiated curriculum, behaviour contracts.

Ashenden's proposal also supports reorganising schools on the basis of programs rather than subjects, decentralising administrative responsibilities, setting up a collegial system of school governance and using Advanced Skills Teachers as an alternative to traditional Heads of Departments. (Chadbourne and Robertson, 1992).

Recently, several initiatives have attempted to create opportunities for trialing Ashendentype proposals. These include the Managing Change in Schools Project (MCIS) set up in Western Australia in 1988, the South Australian Ten Schools Project which commenced in 1990, and the National Schools Project (NSP) launched in 1991.

The MCIS and NSP projects were designed to be different from other school reform initiatives. By adopting a system of 'waivers' they offered selected schools a mechanism to trial new types of work organisation currently prohibited by union and employer policies, awards and regulations. Both projects assumed that giving teachers a 'free hand' to design their own school practices, unencumbered by bureaucratic and industrial constraints, would result in many and varied proposals for a fundamentally different form of work organisation. Overall, that strategy proved less than successful. Very few radical proposals were formulated, approved or implemented; thus very little trialing took place.

For a more productive indication of what teachers would choose to do if given a free hand, it is necessary to look elsewhere. One such place is KIDS, an independent open learning school that has been operating in Perth for the past 19 years.

For several reasons KIDS provides an appropriate model for

exploring alternative patterns of work organisation within the framework of the NSP. It was established in 1974 and therefore has stood the test of time, unlike many other alternative schools. It enjoys a level of autonomy consistent with current government policy to make state schools more self determining. And it began in circumstances akin to the rationale underlying the NSP.

In 1974 Margaret Hodgkin resigned as a teacher from the Ministry (Department) of Education to set up her own school - KIDS. She had found the regulatory framework of the government system and the work organisation of traditional schools to be professionally stifling. She also had a vision of how, by restructuring the work of teachers and students, learning could be improved. KIDS gave Margaret, and a core group of interested parents, a chance to trial this vision, free from centrally imposed constraints.

This report documents the work organisation at KIDS in terms of three priority areas identified by the NSP: student groupings, time management and staffing mixes. The NSP focussed on these three areas because in the early stages of the NSP the employers expressed concern that the project might become simply "a grab bag of unrelated school improvement initiatives" in which "anything goes".

Throughout the report further reference is made to the work of Ashenden. There is no formal link between his work, the NSP and the Mayer Report. However, Ashenden's critique of traditional education and his proposed alternatives do provide a useful framework against which the rationale underlying the NSP and the Mayer Report can be understood.

In addition to the NSP and the ideas of Ashenden, the report analyses KIDS work organisation in terms of a framework proposed in a Schools Council document titled, Developing flexible strategies in the early years of schooling: Purposes and possibilities.

Material for the study came from documents provided by the school and from interviews with the staff - six full time and three part time. Successive drafts of the findings were circulated to those interviewed for comment.

Reference to the NSP in the report applies only to the project as it operated in WA from 1991-2 (Chadbourne 1992b, 1992c)

For other evaluations of the NSP see Angus (1993), Connors

(1992), Independent Education (1992, Vol. 22, No. 3), McRae (1993), Susskind (1993), and Wallace (1993) .

THUMBNAIL SKETCH OF KIDS

KIDS has 116 students, six full time teachers, and a number of part- time specialists who comprise the equivalent of another full time teacher. The students range in age from 5-18 years and are divided into six groups - three groups of 5-9 year old and three groups of 10-17 year old students. \$150 per term is the recommended school fee. Parents pay as much as they can afford. Some pay more, some pay less than the recommended fee.

Teaching and learning takes place at three campuses: a six room house in Fremantle, a large old church and church hall and basement in Maylands, and a purpose-built school building soon to be opened at Gosnells. On Monday, Wednesday and Friday the six groups attend separate campuses where each student works on an

individualised program. Details of these groups for 1993 are as follows:

Campus	Teacher	Number in Group	Age Range
Fremantle	Margaret	28	10-18
Fremantle	Paul	14	5-9
Gosnells	Lesley and Robert	23	5-9
Maylands	Janet	18	5-9
Maylands	John	17	10-17
Maylands	Meredith	16	10-17

All students attend the Maylands campus for science and music on Tuesday, and the Fremantle campus for Indonesian studies and physical education (beach in summer and gym in winter) on Thursdays.

STUDENT GROUPINGS

Ashenden refers to traditional school teaching as the last of the mass cottage industries. The cottage model has provided a common and enduring system of grouping students, namely: a fixed number of age-graded students working with one teacher in one classroom

for a defined period of time and within the framework of a teacher-centred method of instruction. The NSP had hoped that schools would break this mould by proposing more flexible patterns of student grouping: for example, a varied mix of large and small classes, peer and cross age tutoring and better use of technology. Such alternatives would alter the organisation of teachers' and pupils' work. In doing so, it was thought, they would also bring about a closer match between student grouping and learning tasks. During 1992, only two NSP schools in WA fully developed proposals in this area, but neither of them was implemented at the time. One wanted to organise junior primary school students into ungraded classrooms, each containing an age range from K-2. Another school proposed setting up two systems work units in Year 8; this proposal was implemented in 1993.

Over the past 19 years, KIDS has trialled a wide range of different forms of grouping students for learning. The outcome represents far more variety and flexibility than any NSP school has been able to achieve. This year (1993) the following types of student groups are used for teaching and learning.

Whole school as a single learning group: Each Tuesday from 10-12 a.m., the whole school meets for music at Maylands. The part time music specialist plans the program, leads the session, and organises the six full time teachers to act as assistants. According to the Coordinator, "Music is the only thing we all do together, where we're all doing the same task."

Whole school as a set of learning groups: The whole school meets at Maylands for science on Tuesday afternoon, at Fremantle for Indonesian studies on Thursday morning, and at various places for physical education on Thursday afternoon. On these occasions, although everyone is engaged in the same subject or topic area at the same time and in the same place, the students break into different groups of 4-5 and work at different levels on different aspects of the overall subject/topic.

Campus groups: From 9 - 9.30 each morning, the 42 students at Fremantle, 51 students at Maylands and 23 students at Gosnells meet on their home campus with the staff based at those locations. During this period, staff and students make announcements, engage in silent reading, plan the day's program, deal with any complaints, read with partners, and commence work listed on their day plans.

Primary and secondary school age groups: The students split into primary and secondary school age groups for science on Tuesday afternoons. With the secondary group work, the science

specialist does the overall planning and two other staff members act as assistants. The primary age group work with the other teachers. Both groups work at Maylands, though once a month the secondary students spend the afternoon at Scitech where they work in small groups of 2-3's; the primary group does the same thing once a fortnight.

Day-plan groups: When working on their individual day plans (Monday, Wednesday, Friday), students can choose to study on their own or with peers of their own choice. No formal grouping is organised for them. Most of them choose to study in small groups of 4-6, though the size and composition of each group varies with the changing topics throughout the day. Sometimes the day-plan groups meet as a whole. Generally, though, the teachers work with individual children.

Curriculum groups: One exception to the day plan groups described above occurs when the Year 11 and 12 students work together on their TEE course. Much of this course, though, is covered by individual project work rather than whole group lessons.

Age groups: Students are divided into age groups which were given Aboriginal names this year because 1993 is the United Nations Year for Indigenous People. The 5 and 6 year olds belong to the Wilmer group, the 7-9's are the Nanas, the 10-12's Amangu and the 13-18's Maia. These groups serve several purposes, one of which organising learning experiences. For example, occasionally a teacher will call a meeting to teach Wilmer the logic games of Diene, or to help Nana write a collective story using group language experience.

Bus groups: Most children travel to and from school each day by a teacher-driven bus, except for Monday afternoon when parents pick them up to allow for the weekly staff meeting. Numerous types of planned learning activities are possible on the busses, particularly when the the students travel on Tuesday and Thursday to other campuses. These include: reading with partners, silent reading, urban studies, mini-debates between two students on a given topic, Indonesian conversation, and listening to audiotapes.

Outing groups: Students at KIDS may undertake short, organised outings in two's or fours, usually in connection with their independent study contracts. For example: a student making a study of sharks was sent off with a companion to see the Omni film on sharks; a group studying Down Syndrome went to a special school attended by ten children with that disability; a student interested in child care visited a child care centre; two

students investigating the placement of city department stores and bus stops made trips to Fremantle and Perth.

Individual tuition and independent study: The staff at KIDS spend more time on providing individual tuition than on any other

form of work. The second most frequently used approach by teachers is small group work (2-4 students). The least used approach is the traditional class size lesson (20-30 students). For example, one teacher spends approximately 20 minutes every day with each of his 13 day-plan students; the remaining 'instructional time' is spent fairly evenly between small group work and larger group activities (meetings, clean up work, tutorial sessions). The students' time is spent predominantly in self-chosen small groups (2-4 students).

'Developing flexible strategies': The Schools Council (NBEET 1992) identified seven new forms of organisational arrangements that schools around Australia and elsewhere have experimented with recently in connection with the entry, grouping and progression of children through the formal years of schooling. These are:

- multiple entry points and continuous entry
- small group work - learning centres
- multi-age, non-graded, mixed ability grouping
- fluid grouping
- extended grouping - for example, Holweide School
- sub schools, school-within-schools, mini schools
- home rooms - to improve pastoral care.

A specific comment can be made about the first item on this list. KIDS prefers parents to enrol their children at the beginning of the year. It does not have a policy of multiple entry points. In practice, however, continuous entry operates because, "Parents come to us and say, 'I'm desperate. My kid can't make it in the government school. What can you do for me?'"

Over the past 20 years KIDS has experimented with all of the other six items in the list. Whereas for many government schools these flexible strategies are still at the proposal stage, at KIDS they have become long standing arrangements that serve as replacements for the traditional classroom cottage structure.

USE OF TECHNOLOGY

Clearly, a lot more learning takes place at KIDS through small group work, peer and cross aged tutoring, and student managed

learning groups than is the case in most NSP schools. The same can not be said with equal certainty about the use of technology.

Computers: KIDS has 22 computers for 116 students. The children use the computers constantly and have to be rostered to use them for no more than 30 minutes at a time. A few students write their own computer programs, some do word processing, but most use them to play educational games. Very little 'electronic teaching' or carrel type learning takes place on computer. Further, the school's emphasis upon the value of human relationships would not allow it to employ one less teacher and use the money saved to buy a laptop computer for each student.

Videos: During 1990 a survey found that 35% of primary school teachers use 1-2 hours of ABC television in their classroom per week (NBEET 1992). In contrast, KIDS staff and students rarely watch or listen to live TV and radio broadcasts during the school day, although staff often tape and preview such programs and make them available to students when appropriate for their learning.

Independent study material: Generally, KIDS does not subscribe to sequenced learning programs. The philosophy of the school views learning as a process that "jumps all over the place with

the changing interests of the students, not an orderly progression of steps like a railway journey." Thus SRA boxes are avoided, though the school does use the research, news and space labs from this series. Also, KIDS uses as much Distance Education material as it can acquire, which, up till recently, has not been a lot because of the policy governing access to it. Despite the expense involved, the school is prepared to pay for Distance Education material because it is WA oriented, individualised, activity based and of high quality. Similarly de Bono's material, particularly his problem solving program, is highly regarded and used at KIDS because of its focus on lateral thinking.

Low and High Tech Materials: Overall, KIDS has found low tech materials such as wood shavings, sawdust, printers' scraps and furnishes off-cuts more useful than higher tech equipment like the overhead projector, thermal copier and slide projector.

Children take

the low tech materials and become creative with them. The higher tech equipment often leads to large group, teacher-centred instruction, an approach which KIDS keeps to a minimum.

'Developing flexible strategies': The Schools Council (NBEET 1992) cites the following examples of how schools can use technology in innovative ways to create alternative forms of work

organisation.

telematics - use of fax, modem, and telephone links for students to communicate across schools

Newsday project - use of electronic mail systems and bulletin boards by students to edit their own stories and articles as well as those prepared by students in other schools

music - use of work stations that connect music synthesisers with personal computers to study and make music

multimedia software - (eg CD ROM) to combine text, sound, images, animation, graphics and video at astonishing speed.

KIDS has no fax, modem, E Mail, electronic bulletin boards, music synthesisers, or CD ROM. It can't afford them, yet. As they become more commonly used in everyday life (and cheaper), KIDS will no doubt acquire them. The staff are not 'technological refusers'. When it comes to computers, a third are the staff are highly proficient, a third are moderately proficient, and a third are less proficient.

TIME MANAGEMENT

Traditional schools set rigid allocations of time concerned with: start time, recess time, lunch time, finish time, and lesson period time; length of school day, term, and year; teachers' DOTT time, school development time, and staff meeting time. They also have rules regulating the use of time for teacher relief, professional development, long service leave, and holidays. Fixed hours of instruction and inflexible timetable arrangements can place severe constraints upon the most productive use of school resources.

The NSP and MCIS projects generated a number of proposals to restructure the traditional management of time. One involved lengthening the school day so that it would be possible to introduce a nine day fortnight. Most of the others, however, focussed on creating space for more staff meetings within the

official time allocated for instruction - 5 hours 25 minutes per day. Only two of these proposals were implemented in 1992. The others either lapsed from lack of follow-through, or were blocked at the implementation stage by a range of external forces (Chadbourne 1991, 1992a, 1992b). The management of time at KIDS differs significantly from anything that the NSP schools have been able to achieve.

School day: The allocation of time at KIDS shares a few features found in traditional schools. The school day officially starts at 9 a.m., ends at 3.15 p.m. and has a lunch break in the middle; that is, KIDS complies with the state requirement to provide 5 hours 25 minutes of instruction per day, five days a week, Monday to Friday.

School Year: Across the four terms the staff at KIDS have 15 'pupil free' school development days compared with six for government school teachers. This occurs as follows. The students begin each term on the Tuesday of the first week and finish on the Wednesday of the last week. The staff attend school on the Monday of the first week and Thursday and Friday of the last week for planning sessions. The students begin their Christmas holidays a week earlier than their government school counterparts. During that week the staff attend school to write student reports, review the year's work and prepare for the next year. As a staff, the teachers begin working at school in January, a week before the students arrive.

Maths time: All students have maths from 10-11 a.m. on Monday, Wednesday and Friday. They have individualised work books. Often the session will begin with the group as a whole being shown what to do and then individual children try things. Sometimes up to four children will do the same thing but the rest work individually at their own level.

Clean up time: From 3 - 3.15 p.m. each day, all students participate in pack-away time, as part of their social living program. They are divided into family groups with the two eldest members of each group taking responsibility as leaders. Even if the schools had sufficient funds to hire cleaners, "We would still have 'clean up time' to teach the children that who makes the mess cleans it up."

Staff meetings: The Ministry allocates government school teachers 30 minutes per month for staff meetings. Longer meetings require staff to stay beyond 'closing time', a matter at which some teacher unionists draw the line. Staff meetings at KIDS are held on the Maylands campus every Monday afternoon from 4.30 - 7.30 p.m. Sometimes they do not finish till 10 p.m.

Kidsfolk meetings: Once a month, following the staff meeting, a meeting of the parents is held from 7.45 - 9.45 p.m. About 20-30 parents attend these meetings. Staff attendance is 100%.

DOTT time: Government school primary teachers receive 160

minutes of DOTT time per week, while secondary teachers receive 320 minutes. None of the NSP schools seemed to contemplate trading DOTT time for things such as a pay rise or smaller classes. Teachers at KIDS have never had DOTT time. In effect they have accepted a salary cut in return for small classes. If each teacher took on another ten students to gain a \$6000 salary increase (based on KIDS fees of \$600 per year), class sizes would still be smaller than those in most government schools.

Types of leave: At KIDS the staff, including the Coordinator, do not attend inservice courses during school time, nor do they receive long service leave. The staff, as a group, undertake professional development activities during the holidays. The same applies to inservice training necessary to equip them with knowledge and skills to implement new initiatives adopted by the school. During the end of term vacations, the staff spend, on average, one of the two weeks on professional development and inservice work.

KIDS teachers are rarely sick and seem to suffer little stress. On rare occasions when staff are absent, relief teachers are called upon. In some cases two parents fill the gap. When KIDS teachers are sick they are paid to take time off until they recover.

'Developing flexible strategies': The Schools Council (NBEET 1992) documents ways in which the use of time and space can be a critical factor in developing more flexible approaches to school. It cites the following examples.

Special program days: multi-age groups participate in a range of activities on a rotational basis to study a particular theme (for example, health education). KIDS does not often organise such days as a matter of program policy. Occasionally the school will have, say, "a maths day if we get a lot of new material, so that everyone (staff and students) can have a chance to look at it."

Two part days: one-teacher-one-class activities in the morning and whole school (or sub school) activities in the afternoon. KIDS has the equivalent of these days through its day-plan groups, campus groups, and whole school learning sessions.

Relief from face-to-face teaching: for example, clustering DOTT time for collaborative planning and review rather than student marking and individual lesson preparation. KIDS staff

have no DOTT time to cluster. However, team teaching combined with the open learning environment allows ongoing informal staff collaboration virtually anytime it is needed. Formal staff collaboration occurs on Mondays from 4.30 - 7.30 p.m. and on family nights.

Additional non-contact time: restructuring the school day, week and year through flexitime for staff (for example, 9 day fortnights), keeping schools open longer, and redesigning program schedules to facilitate more staff planning, evaluation, liaison and professional development. KIDS staff have no non-contact time to add to, nor have they tried to generate DOTT time through these means.

Creative use of space: developing 'little houses', opening up the school by removing barriers between classroom, using under-utilised community facilities, establishing multi-campus operations, and expanding the resource centre area. KIDS has little houses and a multicampus structure. The Maylands campus was already 'opened up' at the time of purchase because it consists of a big church, church hall and church basement. The school added to the flexibility of these large open spaces by installing an inside stair case between the hall and the basement. Modifications to the Fremantle campus have been constrained by a local shire council requirement not to alter the residential nature of the (school) house. The creative use of space at KIDS occurs not through architectural alterations but

through adaptations of what existing spaces are used for: for example, determining which spaces are used for a quiet area, open floor space, computer corner, music area etc. Generally, the school has few fixed learning areas.

STAFFING MIXES

Ashenden claims that teaching is the last of the mass cottage industries where the traditional classroom, as the cottage, houses only one type of education worker - the teacher. Within the cottage, the teacher has to do everything - high level teaching, routine low level teaching, supervision, clerical tasks, preparation, and attending to children's non academic problems. Consequently, much of what teachers do is not really teaching. A lot of their time is frittered away on tasks that could be done by less qualified people. This reduces their capacity to help students develop how to think, communicate, problem solve, and generally become creative, critical, reflective, autonomous learners. One way out of this situation, says Ashenden, would be to reduce the number of qualified

teachers in a school and use the money saved to employ a larger number of other types of adult education workers at a much cheaper rate. These people could relieve qualified teachers of all the non teaching clutter and low level teaching tasks they currently perform and thus free them up to concentrate exclusively on 'real teaching'. This means that teachers need to be deep skilled rather than multi-skilled.

The NSP and MCIS projects put forward a number of proposals in line with Ashenden's suggestions, though not as radical. One proposal involved replacing a deputy principal with four sub-school coordinators. Another requested permission for cleaning staff to spend some of their time as teachers' assistants: for example, displaying students' work, preparing teaching aids, assisting in drama classes, photocopying worksheets and doing maintenance work in the manual arts room. A third proposal wanted more flexibility in the allocation of ancillary staff duties: for example, assigning the science technician to work also in the art area, or a library assistant to work also in the media area. The first of these three proposals was trialled in a modified form and then dropped. Like the others, it became a casualty of industrial concerns - real or imagined.

Types of staff: The only type of paid staff at KIDS are teachers: six full time and a range of part timers. There are no paid secretaries, gardeners, cleaners, teaching assistants, or maintenance staff. The teachers do their own clerical work. The Coordinator does most of the administration work, on top of her full time teaching load. Staff, students, and parents handle the gardening, cleaning and maintenance work. For example, one teacher mends chairs, fixes cupboards, and maintains the lights. Another teacher cleans the toilets each day. Every day, students form family groups and spend from 3 - 3.15 p.m. to tidy up the rooms. Each weekend, parents are rostered to carry out domestic chores, gardening, minor maintenance, and bulk cleaning activities like laundering tea towels, covering and repairing books, vacuuming the floors and cleaning the toilets.

Structures and leadership: According to the Schools Council (NBEET 1992, p.20), "Many schools have generated a more flexible approach to decision making through the creation of more participative structures." No formal managerial, administrative

or professional hierarchy exists among the six teachers at KIDS. There are no positions such as principal, deputy principal, and head of department, though the school does have a coordinator.

Staff are paid award rates. The three year trained teachers receive the salary of a three year trained teacher, the four year trained teachers receive the salary of a four year trained teacher. Apart from extra work, the Coordinator can not avoid shouldering extra responsibility because the Ministry insists that she be the educationally accountable person.

KIDS is less affluent than most non government schools because of its low teacher/student ratio, low fees, and mortgage repayments. In response to this situation, some staff knowingly and willingly make a voluntary contribution to the school which effectively places them on the starting end of the salary scale. During the early years of the school, the Coordinator donated her whole salary back to the school. Another teacher did much the same.

Within this egalitarian structure, staff with particular expertise take on educational leadership roles. One teacher takes responsibility for designing the science program for the school, another teacher does the same for music, a third for Indonesian studies, a fourth for literature, social studies and maths, and so on. Once these programs are developed, all teachers participate in the delivery of them. In short, educational leadership is shared evenly throughout the school.

Multi-skilling and deep skilling: Because grouping students for learning takes many and varied forms at KIDS, the teachers do not work within a classroom cottage. However, they are multiskilled and carry out more non teaching tasks than teachers in traditional schools. For example, they do more clerical work, parent counselling, bus repairs, cleaning, repairing equipment, nursing, maintaining facilities, building new shelves and cupboards, shopping for all school supplies, and carrying out chores entailed in running four weeks of school camps during the year. They also drive students to and from school by bus which, on average, adds an extra hour to their professional day.

'Developing flexible strategies': The Schools Council outlined how organisational flexibility can be increased by changing traditional staffing arrangements through the creative use of:

- advanced skills teachers
- full time/part time staff appointments
- qualified teacher/teacher assistant appointments
- adults other than teachers
- team teaching
- peer and cross age tutoring

Of these staffing arrangements, KIDS makes more use of team teaching and peer and cross age tutoring than most other schools.

The same applies to full time/part time appointments: the school has six full time teachers and four part time specialists (in music, languages, science, and psychology); it feels no need to swap one full time teacher for more part time specialists. For industrial reasons the school has a policy of not employing teacher aides; it can not afford to. Overall, KIDS probably makes no more or less use than other schools of parents, retired personnel, unemployed graduates, citizens, and professional, trade, and craft people. Finally, while KIDS has not appointed Advanced Skills Teachers, it does have team leaders, coordinators and staff mentors. Further, the longer serving members of the staff have advanced formal qualifications and experience in teaching.

CONDITIONS ENABLING ALTERNATIVE FORMS OF WORK ORGANISATION

Clearly KIDS has been able to cut loose from the traditional mould and establish an alternative form of work organisation in relation to student grouping, the use of time, the nature of teachers' and students' work, and the curriculum. The NSP schools have experienced difficulty restructuring these elements of work organisation. This does not prove that KIDS is better than other schools. Nor does it mean that because KIDS has been innovative, there is no reason why other schools can not do likewise. Some of the conditions enabling KIDS to introduce open education are absent in government schools and perhaps always will be. This chapter outlines those conditions and thereby helps provide a basis for considering whether government schools could adopt practices established at KIDS.

History: KIDS has been an open learning school from the beginning. It was founded on a commitment to provide an alternative to traditional education. It was established with a very clear vision and philosophy in mind and its work organisation was deliberately built around that philosophy. Unlike many government schools, then, KIDS does not have a long standing, deeply entrenched traditional mode of work organisation to change. Nor does it have well established informal power bases within its school community with a vested interest in maintaining a 'cottage' structure. Thus, KIDS was able to introduce alternative patterns of work organisation without having to combat intransigence or shift decades of habit and tradition.

Philosophy: Staff commitment to a common philosophy does not assist attempts to introduce NSP-type reforms if that philosophy justifies the traditional pattern of work organisation in

schools. Some of the NSP schools seemed to be in this position. Their prevailing, and often implicit, philosophy acted as a brake rather than a lever for restructuring. Where a progressive philosophy did exist it tended to advocate student centred learning within the 'cottage' paradigm. The philosophy at KIDS is explicit, written down, publicly available and progressive in terms of requiring an alternative form of work organisation. As such, it provides a type of direction and pressure for flexible strategies not found in some NSP schools.

Size: KIDS is smaller than the NSP schools. This provides a number of advantages. The Coalition of Essential Schools in the USA and Holweide School in Germany claim that a group of teachers can not meaningfully be involved with more than about 80 students in any one year. With six full time teachers and 120 students, KIDS as a whole school comes close to satisfying that requirement. It does so, even more, at the sub school level: for three days a week two teachers work with 42 students at Fremantle, three teachers work with 51 students at Maylands, and two teachers work with 23 students at Gosnells.

The small staff and student population at KIDS make a pure 'cottage' model virtually impossible. Six teachers to cover an age range of 5-18 years means that even under the traditional mode of grouping students, on average each class would have to cover at least two age grades.

The small staff also makes collaborative planning logistically more manageable, consensus more achievable, and hidden agendas more detectable. It is difficult to be subversive when motives and manoeuvres are highly visible and when the informal channels

are an integral part of the formal organisation.

Six staff and 120 students spanning a 5-18 age group rules out the possibility of subject departments, empire building, subject barons and informal power structures. Consequently it is easier to resolve conflicts and implement a problem solving approach, democratic decision making and conflict resolution; it is easier for the whole school to operate as a systems work unit.

Physical resources: Compared with the NSP schools, KIDS has more space and more flexibility to adopt the type of work organisation proposed by Ashenden. Traditional schools are often crowded: small classrooms have to house 30 students. Staff cope by using a teacher-centred lock-step approach but find alternative forms of organisation virtually impossible in such cramped conditions. The accommodation at KIDS is far from crowded. The 42 students and two teachers at Fremantle have six rooms to work in. The 51

students and three teachers at Maylands have a large church, church hall and basement for their activities. The 23 students and two teachers at Gosnells enjoy a three room building. Thus there is plenty of space for learning centres, small group work, individual private study, and the use of technology to depart from traditional styles of teaching. Moreover, because KIDS owns the buildings at Fremantle and Maylands it can modify them without the delays and obstructions that often block extensions and renovation in government schools. And it can do so at a much cheaper rate. To take a case in point. The government built a toilet block for the Maylands campus at a cost of \$42,000. The year before, KIDS built a comparable facility at Fremantle for \$7,000. In the words of one teacher: "We could have done wonders with that \$42,000 if only the government trusted people - we could have built more than just toilets." Owning six busses to transport the entire school population gives KIDS further flexibility and manoeuvrability and adds to its capacity to develop alternative forms of work organisation.

Regulatory framework: Schools attempting to restructure their work organisation along Ashenden and NSP lines often find the path to reform blocked by the regulatory framework. This framework consists of all the 'rules' contained in laws, ordinances, regulations, administrative instructions, industrial awards and agreements, and a range of policies adopted by employers and unions. The NSP and MCIS undertook to waive the regulatory framework wherever possible to allow radical proposals from the participating schools to proceed. However, when it came to the crunch, the schools found that the employer and unions held a lot of the framework to be non negotiable or non waivable.

KIDS is bound by some of the 'rules' within the regulatory framework. For example, it is expected to meet occupational health and safety requirements, provide 5 hours 25 minutes instruction each day, meet standards of efficiency set by the Ministry, and abide by the industrial award covering teachers in non government schools. Also, KIDS must comply with state and federal government census, accountability and registration requirements. By and large, however, KIDS, as an independent school, is exempt from many of the 'rules' affecting the organisation of government schools. For example, KIDS can select its own staff and students, determine its own opening and closing times, and develop its own curriculum.

The school has never been forced to compromise its progressive program and philosophy because of unruly and uncontrollable student behaviour. Nor is it ever likely to. As an independent school, KIDS can readily expel students who are disruptive,

though this has almost never been done. Knowing that provides staff with the confidence to take the risks involved in open education rather than resort to the security of a regimented traditional education structure. This is not to say that all the students at KIDS are perfect. Far from it. Roughly 25 of the 50 students who come to KIDS as teenagers do so because they have been 'behaviour problems' at their previous schools. The staff put in a lot of time counselling these students to change their anti-social behaviour.

KIDS selects its own staff. It prefers to appoint teachers on the basis of having seen them in action. Where possible, KIDS tries to avoid appointments based on advertising, shortlisting and interviewing. It has found that people often misrepresent their real educational beliefs at interviews and present themselves as being more 'open' than they really are. Also, the academic qualifications of applicants do not interest KIDS as much as their personalities, which are better assessed on the job than at an interview. The selection process at KIDS ensures that all teachers subscribe to a common purpose, philosophy and set of core values. This helps staff reach consensus on innovations, prevents ideological conflicts, and reduces the possibility of adopted reforms being subverted by resistance and power struggles. In short, it ensures that staff pull together rather than in different directions. The staff in NSP schools are appointed by central allocation, not local selection. As a result, they may lack philosophical unity which, in turn, impedes a whole school approach to changing established patterns of work organisation.

Industrial Matters: Many of the rules within the regulatory framework are embodied in industrial awards and agreements and in custom and practice. Examples of these rules include the arrangements which maintain DOTT time, class sizes, length of the school day, appointment of staff, promotional decisions, staffing formula, salaries, exclusion procedures, length of school year, transfers, and permanency. Other rules apply to school workers covered by the Civil Service Association (for example, secretaries) and the Miscellaneous Workers Union (for example, cleaners, gardeners, and teachers aides). Many of the changes proposed by the MCIS and NSP schools were blocked by a refusal to waive these rules.

Technically, the staff at KIDS are covered by the conditions within the non government teachers industrial award. In practice, however, no teacher at KIDS is a member of the Independent Teachers Association or insists on 'working to rule'. Partly to ensure the school's viability, and partly on

philosophical grounds, the staff volunteer to forego the usual salary increments, long service leave, DOTT time, inservice courses during 'school time', and a career structure consisting of advanced skills teacher, head of department, deputy principal and principal positions. In return they each have a small bus for their

own private use and work within a structure characterised by: low teacher/pupil ratios, democratic decision making, a huge staff say in the spending of money, students who have contracted to attend school and take education seriously, interactive professionalism, an egalitarian compensation system, and the absence of bureaucratic overlords.

KIDS provides other examples of enterprise bargaining where, at a de facto if not de jure level, industrial relations have been deregulated and devolved to the individual school. The part time music specialist coordinates the music program for the school and

leads the music session on Tuesday mornings in exchange for rent free accommodation in the manse on the Maylands campus. The part time science specialist performs a similar role on Tuesday afternoons in exchange for the opportunity and facilities for regular professional renewal and development: he is a lecturer in science teacher education at a local university. The instrumental music teachers who provide individual tuition at KIDS reduce their fee by \$4 per hour in exchange for use of the school facilities and not having to travel from home to home. Two teachers who worked for years without salary received leave with pay: one visited Japan for two weeks in 1988; the other made trips to USA (four weeks in 1980), Victoria (during a school vacation in 1977) and the UK (three weeks in 1993). Both teachers combined work with a holiday; they visited alternative schools like Summerhill (England) and Kurrajong (Victoria) while on leave.

SOME CLOSING OBSERVATIONS

As noted earlier, Ashenden's critique of traditional schools, and his proposal for restructuring them, provide a conceptual cornerstone for the NSP. It seems appropriate, then, to draw some of the threads of this study together by summarising what KIDS has in common with Ashenden's ideas, and where it parts company with them. KIDS shares common ground with Ashenden in the following areas:

defining the teacher's role as coaching children to become creative, critical, reflective autonomous learners

replacing the age-graded cottage with ungraded and multiple student learning groups

employing mixed modes of teaching and learning - team teaching, individual learning contracts, cross age tutoring, negotiated curricula

using Distance Education technology and learning materials

adopting integrated programs of study rather than a subject based curriculum

decentralising educational leadership and establishing a collegial system of school governance.

KIDS supports Ashenden and Shanker's concern to organise teachers' and students' work in ways that ensure children engage in creative endeavours and learn to argue, persuade and produce rather than spend their time sitting still and being quiet. On the other hand, KIDS dissents from aspects of Ashenden's proposals by:

rejecting the distinction between teachers' work that is 'real teaching' and 'not real teaching'

endorsing the need for teachers to take on a multifaceted role and be multiskilled rather than pushing for a more specialised role and deep skilling

using its funds to employ a full complement of qualified teachers rather than reducing the number of such teachers and employing non qualified adult education workers at a cheaper rate

declining to make significant use of programmed learning packages and computer based instruction.

Despite these areas of dissent, the work organisation of KIDS fits Ashenden's framework more closely than any of the NSP schools. The prospect of government schools in WA following the direction set by KIDS will depend partly on factors, such as: the impact of the Ministry's recent discussion document, Devolution: The next phase - How far should we go?; the possibility of creating enabling conditions like those outlined in chapter five; and the extent to which centralised industrial relations processes become deregulated and replaced by enterprise bargaining. A lot will depend also on the view that government schools form about the student learning outcomes of KIDS. On that matter, there is one very powerful indicator of what the

teachers at KIDS believe: they send their own children to the school.

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