



Communicating communities:

Sustaining effective schooling

Paper presented at

AARE Conference Brisbane 2008

Dr Eleanor Peeler

The University of Melbourne

epeeler@unimelb.edu.au

Communicating communities: Sustaining effective schooling

In the early years of the twenty-first century we are informed about technological and scientific innovation, global, political actions, economic change, reform and transformation. Often the rapidity of change can be unnerving as it impacts on families, schools, the workplace and the broader community. In Victoria in the 1970s, changing educational policies and public attitudes forged closer relationships between schools and the community. The seeds of autonomy sown at the time empowered the decision-making capacities of schools as they developed partnerships with the broader population. Relationships within and between the community groups, namely teachers and students, parents and teachers, school councils and education departments, were fundamental to effective functioning. An evolution occurred to develop relationships between the school and community to help them work with a common cause to keep pace with social and technological transformation while optimizing students' learning potential.

This paper takes an historic view of the process of change when an educational leader imagined alternatives and introduced policies that changed the way schools and communities would interact. More specifically it looks at the policies of Lawrie Shears, who imagined and implemented a change that continues to influence education in Victoria. Of particular note is his vision for the school and community partnerships whereby community members would have voice in school organization. To understand what was involved it includes a discussion on leadership, how a leader imagines change and enticed others on board. With this understanding, the paper looks at concepts of community and how relationships within communities interact, a fundamental element of successful community operation, which lay at the crux of the policy change. The steps towards implementing the new model are discussed in relation to developing school community partnerships and to consider its impact from the point of view of others.

Data from a biographical study of Lawrence (Lawrie) Shears who administered education in Victoria for fifteen years informs this paper. His personal records as well as interviews with him and others involved in education at the time enlighten discussion of the process of change and how it unfolded. Forty years since sewing the seeds to develop school/community links one must ask their relevance to society today as it gears up for a future vastly different from the past. In a climate of uncertainty today, how essential are they and how should they function to ensure educating for a sustainable future?

Waves of change

A future is the past modified by the present and given magnetism by our hopes and aspirations. Futures for all things suffer from the pressures of tradition, habit and a general resistance to change. (Shears 1985 p 2)

A little over half a century ago, in 1957, Sputnik was launched and the Soviet satellite set in orbit. In 1969, just over ten years later came the moon landing. Since then rapidly increasing satellite technology has shaded the Sputnik and moon landing triumphs. More recently global instant communication has replaced earlier forms reliant upon the slower waves of the wireless and TV and is taking over from the print based daily news. As with the Sputnik flight and moon landing, the significance of historic landmarks in education in Victoria has paled. Current debates and new concepts overshadow the evolutionary steps that laid the system's foundation and are dimming knowledge of those who paved the pathways.

Waves of change continually affect all sectors of the community, nonetheless the educational population where their ripples extend through government levels, administrative divisions, school communities and filter into the classrooms. Recent Federal proposals to nationalise the curriculum and link social benefits to school attendance have been greeted with acclaim in some sectors while they have made others squirm. The imposition of such changes has threatened to quash individual and political voice in public debate. It is clear that the force of these recent waves has caused friction in educational communities at national, state, local and family levels among stakeholders who hold shared interests in schooling. Certainly education cannot be immune from the waves of change or from such debates. It must be open to new ideas and innovations and be equally responsive to global pressures and local needs but while some waves pound with fury others infiltrate social attitudes by their gentle flow.

Like the waves that sweep in change, social, economic, political and technological forces impact in varying ways on education throughout the nation. Those that batter the here-and-now give glimpses of new ways of performing and improving performance of the individual in the classroom, the operation of the school community or the system wide. Whereas aggressive change can cause turbulence and dissent that upset communities and relationships therein, gentle waves result in ripples that permeate social thinking. They are more readily negotiated or met with smooth sailing by those who engage with the new ideals. Unlike huge swells that catapult change into an unprepared system, effective educational change requires a 'coalition' of interests wherein harmonious organization drives its force and direction (Touraine 1981; Morrow and Torres 1999, cited in Goodson & Hargreaves, 2003 p 87). The force of change, rather than surge with that of a tidal wave should be carefully executed with evolutionary stages set in motion to achieve the required result.

Those who initiate and implement new ideas must understand the complexities involved. To explore the process involved this paper takes an historic view of changes that occurred in education in Victoria in the 1970s, in particular the process of developing school/community partnerships. It was devised to soften barriers that existed in some educational sectors that maintained distance between what went on in the school and what was seen to occur from beyond the school gate. Generally this was not the case in rural areas where the local school was the hub of community activity; teachers participated in community life while school buildings and grounds were the centre for annual picnics, sports days, occasional dances and in some cases church services on Sundays (Waugh 1987). The concept the 'School and The Community' and the subsequent process of strengthening links lay the foundation of a policy

paper presented by Lawrie Shears, Director-General of Education in Victoria (1973-1982) to principals and school staffs and all interested people in 1973. It called for collaboration and offered community voice in the functioning of local schools and was subsequently passed by Act of Parliament in 1975.

The waves as a metaphor are a useful tool to review the evolution of the school/community movement that began when these seeds were sewn. To understand the issues involved discussion looks at concepts of community and the role of leadership in order to understand how Lawrence Shears, as Director-General of Victoria's education community for almost a decade, imagined a new direction and enticed others on board. It follows the steps he took to alert educational stakeholders - administrators, principals, teachers, parents and members of parent and teacher organisations, council members and other interested persons - of changes he perceived and the process involved in their implementation. His actions were underpinned by his philosophy 'to sustain a viable approach to learning and tackling ongoing change the school-community bond must remain strong' (Shears papers).

Communities

We tend to think of community as an overarching body that embraces the population in its entirety but are similarly aware of discrete units that function individually and collaboratively within the broader structure. Whether the community is a discrete unit or complex and multiply connected, a democratic approach is an ideal way to autonomy and self-governance. The concept of community assumes unity based on mutuality of interests and communal support. Ideally there is a desire to sustain an ecological co-existence between members by ensuring harmony, security and social equality (Kostogriz and Peeler 2004). In the context of education each school is a discrete unit and correspondingly a member of the broader education body. Each unit embraces the teachers, students and family members as well as others from the wider community who take active roles as voluntary helpers or elected school councillors. From either perspective relationships within the discrete units and between each and the larger body are equally important. In this context the school/community relationship is central to this discussion.

In terms of Wegner (1998), individuals become active participants in the community action as they experience, engage and contribute. While they share a sense of belonging they may hold competing views, which can be tempered by negotiation and working in a unified manner to achieve a common goal. In this sense, community suggests togetherness and commonality although it is rare that within any social community that harmony and common thought continually persist. My interpretation of an ideal community corresponds to Wegner's (1998) view in that members have shared interests, sense of ownership and belonging. Though they develop mutual relations, individuals may hold differing viewpoints at varying times. In a democratic community these can be aired and discussed. In this way there is equality between members rather than power being wielded from the top. While ideally community gives connotations of kinship, segregation and seclusion within community and between communities is common. In any group, regardless of size, the challenge to introduce change involves understanding the need to maintain the ecological coexistence among community collectives. Each unit must deal with competing forces that determine membership, such as those that establish inclusion or exclusion and the relationships between 'old-timers' and 'newcomers' (Kostogriz & Peeler 2004). An ideal community is stable, but in a climate of ever-increasing change the initiator must realise the consequence of tilting the scale to cause asymmetry or imbalance. This is not to say that debate is unhealthy in any community that is socially aware.

Within a community group there is give and take, push and pull, power with or without glory for some and defeat for others. Tension within community cannot be construed in a negative light or solely as a result of interactional conflict. Tension may arise from new ideas with a future focus that challenge community members to rethink their position or future direction. Rather than adhere to practice as it has always been done the situation may arise that new ideas are better suited to social trends of the time. A healthy community must accept the challenge to rethink its traditions, be prepared to change and be in tune with the needs of an ever-evolving society. In line with Wegner's (1998) proposal, elements of resistance can be healthy too as there must be good reason for change to occur. For healthy change to occur it is important that community members are given time to think, evaluate issues that affect their cause and make decisions accordingly. The key point is an evolution of change with collaborative engagement between stakeholders rather than a spur of the moment whim by a leader or group whose aim is to revolutionise common practice.

The school/community relationship is fundamental to a democratic approach to autonomous, self-governing institutions. Sound relationships between school and community enable them to work with a common cause to keep pace with social and technological transformation while at the grass roots level to optimise students' learning potential. In Victoria, changing educational policies in the 1970s forged closer relationships between schools and the community. The seeds of autonomy sown at the time empowered the decision-making capacities of schools as they developed constructive partnerships with the broader population. New policies encouraged communication within and between those embraced in the community groups giving them voice and dispelling barriers that previously kept them apart.

Leadership for change

The Macquarie Dictionary defines leadership as guidance and direction, action and opinion. The terms 'guidance' and 'opinion' suggest others are involved and the possibility of collaboration. 'Direction' supports the idea of 'vision' and 'focus' while 'action' suggests that leadership involves 'activity'. Leadership by definition is linked to administration where the actions taken should be progressive. In educational spheres leadership is not confined to the upper echelons of the system but is evident across the spectrum of schooling, including community and family structures.

Leadership, 'calls for establishing direction, aligning people, motivating and inspiring, and achieving change' in the process of 'setting the direction of the organization' (Caldwell, 2007 p 225). In the same vein innovative leadership requires careful goal setting and identification of needs, to present policies with a *purpose*; a leader must *plan, prepare* and *budget* and continually pause to *evaluate* progress while maintaining momentum (Simanungkalit & Moyle, 1987). To lead effectively one must take a holistic approach and be able to *prepare, envisage* and *activate* (Shears, 1961) a task from its point of inception and throughout its developmental stages until it comes to fruition.

These approaches emphasise developmental stages of belief in the pursuit, the facility to learn and make decisions during the process of change, evaluate the learning and appraise the present position. The process of constant review allows the leader to re-state her/his initial belief that the task is worthwhile (Shears, 1975). In this way it becomes a cyclic process with a facility to re-assess progress and permits her/him to imagine alternatives and if necessary change tack. However, the process of administering for change should be structured and

purposeful and as Lawrie Shears considered the need for consensus that change is desirable (Shears 1976). This view complies with his belief that ‘the most potent force for producing desirable change in education must be the teacher whether s/he is working in administration, research or teaching’ (Shears, 1970 p 8). The definition of teacher here is synonymous with educator, one who is trained to teach though s/he may have moved from the classroom to take on another educational responsibility. To see this more clearly one can imagine the teacher’s position as one who must deal with students’ learning, social, physical and psychological development and wellbeing. The teacher, or teacher administrator, must be able to interact with parents who may or may not share the same agenda, and similarly manage all levels of the educational hierarchy and bureaucracy. Whatever thread of the network, educational change must focus on providing the ultimate conditions for the education of the individual. The leader who loses sight of this aim may perpetuate undesirable former practice (Shears, 1970).

Portraying one’s self as inspiring and innovative, a leader must be aware of limitations that counter administrative imagination. One is constrained by boundaries of the activity itself, by relationships of those involved, characteristics of those delegated to support the activity and the culture of the organization, explicitly its traditions, practices and ethics. Similarly a leader must be alert to internal and external forces that can alter the direction and be alert to enforced change incurred by social, political and global trends. Notwithstanding the need to work within the confines of the system, possibilities exist for an imaginative leader to pursue her/his own ideals.

Effective leadership in education is vital across the spectrum of roles. Concepts of relationships portrayed in the Shears’ philosophies emphasise flexibility in group configurations and support the view that social practice takes different forms according to context (Shears, 1952). In turn relationships can potentially affect the meaning and power of individual performance (Lankshear et al., 2000) of those involved in the process of change. Beatty (2007) suggests that ‘emotions shape and reflect our experience of ourselves and others and the ability to re-envision our place in the social process’ (p 333). It seems that perceptions of self shift according to position, role and situation and respond to a person’s identification with particular social communities, sets of values, interests and beliefs. For instance, administrators, teachers, parent groups and unionists take a particular stance according to consensus among their particular group members. In line with the thinking of Shears (1952) and Wegner (1998), teachers, principals, mid-level and senior administrators are all challenged to balance their leadership stance while they negotiate with others whose backgrounds and experience may differ but whose interests and/or delegated responsibilities are shared. Within the uncertainties of group configuration the notion that responsible leaders must prepare, envisage and activate (Shears 1961) are vital in today’s climate of accountability and demands to meet successful outcomes. Nevertheless, one must not forget emotional and inter-relational factors (Beatty, 2007) as essential elements of leadership and the capacity of the leader to enthuse others in the decision making, communicating with them throughout and building their morale (Shears 1961). Such factors are like waves that continually lap the shore and over time influence change.

Case study of educational change

Background

Education in Victoria underwent incredible change throughout the twentieth century. It began when Frank Tate introduced a system of government secondary schooling that gave the opportunity for all to attend school beyond Grade 8. Following cuts in development

during the great depression and the war years the school population burgeoned in the post war decades. The Post World War 2 situation is relevant to this paper when Victoria's population boomed as birth rates increased and immigrant schemes expanded. Melbourne's suburbia spread, new schools were needed and more teachers required for infant, primary and secondary classrooms. An intense building program took place to provide schools, colleges to train teachers and hostels to accommodate country student teachers undertaking their courses. These were the 1950s and 60s when growth in government schooling placed enormous pressures on the Education Department that needed to expand its capacity, infrastructure and personnel to cope and at the same time advance.

At the time the Department was hierarchical. Control and decision making procedures filtered from the top through varying levels. This posed administrative shortcomings in catering efficiently for students in various educational sectors and schools dispersed in the expanding metropolis and in regional areas. In a nation that was developing its own voice the hierarchical structure was non-democratic. Power and decision-making were removed from the action that took place in the schools. Social equality was a missing ingredient of a system governed by a Director-General whose actions some regarded as dictatorial; however, according to the Westminster system they were endorsed by his Minister and policy changes required an Act of Parliament.

The man

In 1973 Dr Lawrence (Lawrie) Shears was appointed Director-General. He had worked his way through the system from his primary and secondary years at government schools (1927-38), as a student teacher (1939-40), teacher trainee and university graduate qualified to teach in primary and secondary divisions. During the early years of the great expansion of education in the 1950s he was appointed to his first administrative role as Survey and Planning Officer, He was called to advise on suitable sites to build new schools and teachers' colleges, including Burwood where later he was principal for 8 years (1961-1969). He attained knowledge of overseas systems when he visited Britain for his doctoral studies in 1951-52 and the United States where he studied trends in education as a Harkness Fellow in 1959-60.

Lawrie Shears' diverse and rich life experiences equipped him for this senior administrative position. He was a son of the system who progressed through the normal channels of schooling and held perspectives of education influenced locally and internationally. These experiences equipped him with philosophies that enabled him to imagine optional structures for the Victorian system. His foresight and strategic planning helped him foresee alternatives, implement his goals and set change in motion. The Shears' vision was to break the shackles of the hierarchical system and to minimise distance between the centre of control and the place of action. His policies encouraged collaborative engagement with community groups, putting power where the people were and acted as a channel of communication between administrators and those at the chalkface. The Shears' concept imagined multiple communities acting independently yet within the overall educational organization, each autonomous in its own right. He endeavoured to set these in place but it is important to note that the process encouraged evolution not revolution.

The task

To realise the enormity of his task it helps to understand the complexity of the educational community in Victoria at the time. In the mid 1970s Lawrie Shears wrote

The provision of education in Victoria in 1975 is 'big' business. The Education Department is in the 'top eight' of business undertakings in Australia. It has 2,240 outlets (schools), 60,000 employees (50,000 of whom are highly trained professionals) and a capital investment in lands and buildings which runs into billions of dollars, It has a direct clientele of 625,000 pupils, an indirect involvement of hundreds of thousands of parents, a potential market for its product which includes every employer in the State of Victoria' (Shears, The Age, 4th August 1975)

Though the Education Department in Victoria was a large empire that many saw as unwieldy, Lawrie Shears discerned ways to restructure administration and reduce central control. When he came into office, educational decision-making was remote from the action in schools. In establishing the Department's direction, as defined by Calwell (2007), Lawrie Shears was intent upon shifting sources of power into the hands of regional staff and school communities to give parents and teachers a voice in the day-to-day operations of their local schools. He attempted to diffuse the centrally structured administrative hierarchy, spread the power base and encourage autonomy and decision-making at local level. In turn this increased leadership opportunities throughout the broader education community, or in Wegner's (1998) terms, encouraged community action among active participants. Though he was a mover and shaker who recognized the inevitability of change he was cautious that change must be advantageous. While he defined himself as a democratic leader he embraced others into his confidence to forge a coalition of interests (Touraine 1981; Morrow and Torres 1999, cited in Goodson, 2003). He was one who constantly reviewed his vision and if necessary redefined his position to take control when necessary. Such was the case when he addressed the annual conference of technical schools' principals in 1975.

I am hoping that there will be some sort of consensus to consider the changes that are proposed or that are taking place are desirable. I am not the sort of person who can work on the basis of one day to the next without some sort of objective, some sort of plan. (Shears, 1975)

Lawrie Shears was appointed Director-General in 1973 following three years in the assistant's chair. This was the Whitlam and Karmel era that encouraged innovation. He envisaged, prepared and activated his own innovations (Shears 1961), which shone throughout his term (1973-82) and reflect in his five policy papers that set the direction for education in the State. Three papers focused on devolution of administrative power and dissemination of authority to regions and schools. One was devoted to special services and the other to leadership and career pathways for teachers. In his role as Director-General Lawrie Shears endowed education with a new identity, gave voice to smaller groups and put power where the people were, into the community and its schools. He did this by way of evolution that began with representation on school councils, release of departmental facilities for community use and the concept of Total Community Resource Planning where community assets were shared on a multi-user basis, for instance, the construction of halls and gymnasiums for governmental and Catholic schools and libraries for use by the school and community. In a recent interview Lawrie Shears describes the significance of the five policy papers

The first one was enlarging the office of the Director General and the creation of a system of Assistant Directors General, which took into account the huge increase in the size of the administrative task after the war in the fifties and sixties. Some understanding of the administrative tasks and how they could be handled was

necessary. The establishment of a planning division that was Paper two. Paper three was Structure at Regional Level and dealt with the establishment of regional directors. Paper four dealt with the School and the Community and introduced further the school council movement, bringing the community into the schools. The fifth Paper dealt with the Teachers and the School Administrator (Shears interview 2007)

The objective to democratise the Education Department was not new. Waugh (1987) describes the Gary Plan of 1923, 'The Future of Education Report' of 1943 presented by the ACER and the Freeman Butts report of 1954 that criticised 'the rigid centralisation found in the Education Departments throughout Australia' (p 167). The Gary Plan had earlier attempted to extend the use of school buildings to evenings and vacations with trial sites in Warrnambool, Bendigo, Murrumbidgee and St Kilda. Perhaps the scheme enabled Windsor Primary School to extend support to ex-service-personnel who attended occupational therapy classes there (Blake 1973 p 360). A similar plea lay at the heart of a call by the Victorian Teachers' Union and the National Fitness Council in 1945 for common use of sports grounds, halls and libraries. The following year the Heidelberg model equipped each of three new housing developments with 'neighbourhood units' incorporating a school and hall in a garden setting. Community facilities included a centre for pre-natal and infant welfare, a crèche, library and space for club activities.

According to Waugh (1987) until the 1960s, parent involvement in schools was minimal, apart from fund raising and working bees. Parent organizations were considered marginal and their worth to a large extent undervalued. Meet the Teacher' nights became the vogue in the 1960s. In line with this claim, Hon. Joan Kirner, who later to become Education Minister recalls earlier meetings with Fred Brooks during his term as Director-General (1965-73).

My first impressions were of Fred Brooks, a lovely man absolutely lovely and a real gentleman, who treated the Mother's Club delegations initially as having afternoon tea and a nice chat. We had to diffuse him of that and write our own agendas and persuade him to talk turkey (Kirner interview 2007)

Waugh continues that Education in Victoria was a system divided. The technical division was unique as it already had parents on its school councils, an inequity in regard to primary and secondary divisions. During the late 1960s and early 70s the momentum to develop 'Alternative Schools' showcased possibilities for parental involvement, such as 'learning exchanges' where parents shared their skills. Such actions endorsed the enthusiasm among groups that were keen to breach the school community divide and display their potential to work together.

Early in his parliamentary career, Hon. Lindsay Thompson who later became Victorian Education Minister, observed trends in New South Wales were shifting power from the central office. In a recent interview he recalled his early observations from the backbench at the time

When I was Secretary to Cabinet in 1957, I was particularly interested in Education. I travelled up to NSW to study their Regional System and I decided that something like that should be introduced in Victoria but there was a fairly strongly entrenched view that it should stay as a centralised system ... it was effectively impossible for people to handle everything from Headquarters ... there was a need for the

development of a Regional System ... Lawrie didn't disagree with that. (Thompson interview 2007)

Lawrie Shears was undoubtedly aware of the earlier moves to devolve power and embrace community voice, which helped him formulate his own direction. His first steps to implement the 'School and the Community' policy was just six months into his appointment as Director-General on 5th May 1973. On 9th November that year he issued a memorandum to 'Principals and Staffs of All Schools' with a draft document. The memorandum identified the current state and indicated a proposed shift to increase involvement among parents and community members in decision-making. He requested that copies of the draft document be disseminated among school councils, committees and parent organisations. The memorandum also mooted the 'Victorian Education Council' whose actions would 'reflect the interests of a wider range of groups interested in education; to establish an effective "sounding board" for various views on educational policy' (Policy Paper 4). He assured parents and teachers that their present right to direct access to the Minister would not change. Although not identified in the memorandum, direct access to the Director-General was similarly a recognised feature of the education system at the time. The memorandum claimed that changes would be evolutionary 'during the next decade' rather than a sudden upheaval of what was currently in place. In conclusion it invited comment on the accompanying draft.

9th November 1973

As you are aware public interest in education has increased considerably in the last decade. Parent and community organisations wish to play a more active part in educational activities. School principals and staffs have views above their own professional roles. The material included in the accompanying paper 'Some thoughts on the community and the school' is aimed at finding a present day solution to these problems.

The draft document attached to the memorandum identified

- The school as a Major Educational Unit
- The School as a Focus of the Community
- School Councils and Education Committees
- The Powers and Composition of School Councils
- The Powers and Composition of Education Committees

An interim report issued in April 1974 summarised progress of the school/community action. It indicated increasing demand for capital works, equipment and plant available for community use. It also suggested that schools were moving into educational areas previously undertaken by families at home. In the document Lawrie Shears noted that the socially reactive society of the time was placing increased demands on schools and there was a tendency to 'Let the school do it!' There was a feeling that parents were abdicating their responsibility for a child's actions to the school but warned that teachers and schools were ill equipped to fulfil parental roles. The document concluded, 'It is a live issue', emphasising its ongoing nature and endorsing the process of negotiation involved in developing school/family/community. It claimed 400 responses to the November memorandum and to evaluate these had held 6 meetings with representatives of teacher organizations, principals' associations and departmental administrators, chaired by Minister Thompson.

I expect more power over administrative action will be transferred to the school unit in Victoria during the next decade. The local community will have a bigger influence

and involvement in its schools. I believe that these developments are both desirable and inevitable.

I hope you will take the opportunity to discuss the recommendations and let principals' associations, teacher organizations, parent organizations, community groups and the Education Department know your views. (April memorandum)

Responses to the 7th November memorandum suggested uneasiness among some school staffs who felt their position as professional educators may be undermined by non-professional community/parental 'know-how'. The document warned of the need to protect the educational role of the school in the interests of the children. Similar concerns were previously expressed at a conference held in 1973 that gave interested parties a chance to discuss the issues and air their views. Bessant (1973) argued that local control would threaten teachers' professional expertise, while high school principal Murray (1973) argued that local voices would undermine disciplinary procedures. He claimed that parents were busy with their own commitments. Furthermore, he believed that various Regulations and Acts safeguarded the current practice of teacher selection. Opinions in support of the Shears' philosophy from another high school principal held that decision-making should be close to the level of execution (Mahood, 1973), namely at regional and local levels. A recently appointed Regional Director believed that ideally the result of any action would result in greater involvement of the community in the local school (Moyle, 1973). Heeding the doubts and concerns, particularly those about teachers' professionalism, Lawrie Shears defined the school's administrative function and its educational function and saw the need to clarify 'community involvement'. He similarly foresaw possible division between community use of school buildings and equipment AND community activity in the educational program. At all costs he believed that care should be taken not to interfere with 'basic professional and therefore personal relationship between teacher and child' (Shears Memorandum 1974).

On 17th May 1974 a progress report was disseminated. It was a synopsis of progress and action taken over last the 7 months and a statement of the current position. It drew on the technical school council model and sought to apply it to primary and high school committees. A trial was implemented in 10 high schools, 10 technical schools, 10 primary schools. Of the primary schools, 5 would be selected with more than 225 students and the other 5 with less than 225. Schools Commission funding would be used to conduct a 2-year experiment from 1975 to 1976.

On 24th June 1974 a further memorandum sent to school principals, staff, Chairmen of School Councils or Committees, corresponded with a press release issued by the Education Ministers. It stated that powers of school councils would be extended subject to legislation and listed their responsibilities

- Contractual arrangements for provision of school maintenance and improvements
- Joint use of facilities by municipal authorities
- Employment of ancillary staff – clerical assistants, teacher aides, cleaners
- Administering accountable grants
- Exercising supervision of buildings and grounds and to make recommendations to Regional Directors re their annual maintenance
- Entering contractual arrangements re spending of moneys provided for specific purposes by the Minister and to supplement these by school raised funds

Over the next eighteen months there was ongoing negotiation concerning the policy to strengthen the link between schools and the community and give greater powers to school councils. There was certainly discussion during the interim among and between parent organizations, teachers' unions, schools, principals' associations and departmental staff. Questions were asked regarding staff selection procedures and there was uncertainty of the composition of school councils. Some questioned the right of lay people to determine educational policy for the school. While there was consensus on some points there was divergence on others, but there was certainly negotiation, pull and tussle and collaboration between groups and the department. Two years after the concept was set in motion the Education Minister Hon. Lindsay Thompson presented the Education (School Councils) Bill to parliament in November 1975. The Bill was eventually passed and set in train alternatives that have evolved in succeeding years.

A parallel thrust to optimise community use of school facilities was occurring throughout the same period. It proposed to establish cooperative use of premises and grounds by the school and broader community. In 1973 the Youth, Sport and Recreation Act (State Schools Premises) was passed, which vested school councils with authority to authorise 'outside bodies to use the school buildings and grounds subject to such conditions that the council may wish to impose' (Education (School Council) Bill 1975). Furthermore school and municipal councils had power to enter agreements to make improvements, renovations and repairs on school land and enter agreements for joint use of school land by the local community. As with the School and the Community Act, it incurred a lapse of two years for the concepts to reach fruition.

Reflecting on the change

Though four decades have elapsed since the events described, the significance of the School and the Community action is remembered today by those involved at the time. Former Minister for Education Hon. Robert Fordham recalls that Lawrie Shears identified the need for change and initiated it in the complex educational environment of the period

Lawrie realized he was living in an era of change and that it was important for someone holding his office to be able to demonstrate both to the many thousands of employees, teachers, office people and others as well as the community at large that he was conscious of that need for change and that the Department was working on that issue. He became a public face of education (Fordham interview 2007)

Though working collaboratively with the Education Minister of the time, Hon. Lindsay Thompson, Lawrie Shears was at the fore of media discussion on education in Victoria. He was visible in newspapers and his presence obvious in the numerous school communities he visited. He was well situated to stir and shake throughout the education organization as he met with relevant groups and organised succeeding stages of the proposed changes.

Former Premier and Education Minister in the succeeding Labor government, Hon. Joan Kirner reflects on a stance she took as leader in parents' organizations. She welcomed the change though held some differing views at the time of the school/community debate.

I was the activist parent demanding with others a better delivery for our kids in Victoria at the same time I was part of the dispenser of Commonwealth Government Commission funds and in particular the development of programs, which had parent participation ... those who were parents have to be part of decision-making, not just

making lamingtons. If you go through the media of the day, you'll find me saying things like its no good just baking cakes anymore, you have to have a say. To my great interest I found that Lawrie had a similar view. He didn't quite get it about the parents but he knew that in his view teachers and parents needed to contribute to the decisions about education (Kirner interview 2007)

Dr Graham Corr, an Associate Professor in charge of the Education Resource Centre at the University of Melbourne, recalls how the Schools and the Community movement contributed to providing shared resources for schools and local communities

We found that in secondary schools instead of building a school library for the school alone, the notion of integrating them to be a community resource. It became very strong and made a lot of sense, so that again it broke down the barriers between the school and the community literally with extended hours, integrating them as a community resource rather than confined to the school level. It blew away the whole notion that you closed the school gates at 4 o'clock and nobody entered into the building without the permission of the principal. The whole concept of using school resources as a community resource, so that their buildings, their grounds, the basketball courts, the ovals, playgrounds for kids extended hours etc. all came from the notion 'this is a community resource, it's not a school resource that closes at 4 o'clock and nobody touches it until the principal walks back in the gate' (Corr interview 2007)

Neville Barwick, Assistant Director-General - Buildings, was in charge of the building program in the late 1970s. He remembers the concept of Total Community and highlights the value of shared resources and facilities between schools in the government and Catholic education systems.

Out at Doncaster/Templestowe there was a block of land that really wasn't big enough for the school by itself, but it abutted some Catholic owned land and five acres of council owned land. The council was very supportive and they offered the council chambers for public meetings ... we built a school that has the core facilities shared with separate classrooms going off at different angles to maintain different ethos of day-to-day education and the environment centre is on the council land and the tennis courts are on state land (Barwick interview 2007)

Dr Max Waugh, a former primary school principal delighted in the opportunities legislation offered. His viewpoint corresponds with attitudes discussed pertaining to community school where parents came to the school to help.

The community certainly had a right to be involved in what was happening in schools as far as the administration of schools and in the curriculum policy etc. It was something that came quite naturally to me. It was like a shot in the arm to find a person who agreed with my philosophy ... at Upwey P.S. because we had a club's programme and up until then you had parents coming in and helping, reading etc. I wanted to carry it further and I had this idea of having parents with expertise coming in one afternoon a week, about an hour and a half, working with grade 3 -6 kids in an area of sharing their interests ... I went to Wattle View Primary School as Deputy Principal and we had a club's programme there ... we got thousands of dollars from

the Federal Government, the Whitlam government was in and it was an Innovations Grant and we did it on a much larger scale (Waugh interview 2007)

Waugh recognized the worth of educators being placed in positions that influenced change. Lawrie Shears as Director-General was an educator who had built his career in education. He sums up his feelings and the impact on him personally that rippled through the school communities under his principal-ship.

These three guys: you've got Shears, he's more on the school council idea ... you've got Dixon and the Minister of Education - all acting in tandem. They were heady days of community involvement in schools and I went along with that. I was inspired by those men! (Waugh interview 2007)

Reflecting on the waves of change: Implications for sustaining effective communicating communities

In the 1970s the waves of change that broke upon the shore brought changes to education in Victoria. Today's schools have responsible school councils composed of members of staff and community members. Their responsibilities are publicised on the website of the Department of Education and early Childhood Development, the body that evolved from the former Education Department.

Reflecting on the process of change that occurred during the Shears' years it appears that it set in place the opportunity for community voice through participation. Though the Victorian Education Council did not eventuate the school/community action resulted in the school becoming a major focus of the community with its composition and powers clearly defined. Development of this movement in succeeding years has perhaps sown seeds for current discussion that advocates further links between local schools and local business organizations. While this appears to be a logical progression, activators must learn lessons from the 1970s action whereby negotiation and discussion were integral to the change process. The progression of this school/business concept is as yet unknown; better it be the next stage in an evolution than a tidal wave that causes confusion. The Shears' approach was to disseminate advice to schools through principals that stimulated participation, discussion and collaboration among and between groups. The two-year period of discussion resulted in the passing of the Education (School Councils) Bill 1975 that encouraged local involvement in schools and gave greater power to school councils. Since then, changes have further evolved but the case studied here demonstrates careful planning and democratic execution of a philosophy that became a reality. Its gradual evolution encouraged community voice in a process that has ultimately resulted in greater community input in decision-making in local schools.

In the forty years since the Shears' years, technology has changed day-to-day living. On trains people fiddle with mobile phones, ipods and other nano-technological devices, call and text one another and listen to music. Less commonly people read newspapers or books. Computers, ipods, digital cameras and mobile phones in the classroom have already replaced traditional methods in many schools. The fact that the Federal Government is proposing to equip every student with their own personal computer is evidence of the shift. Who can foresee the tools of the future? What next? Constant technological, social, economic, political and global revolutions are changing patterns of living. It is uncertain whether there is the luxury of long-term planning or that decisions must be made in the shorter-term, however, educational leaders must imagine, initiate and facilitate the entire process of change in a



rapidly changing world. It is to be hoped that educational policy is well informed by discussion, negotiation and collaboration between administrators, community members and those in schools. Decisions must not be made in isolation, or in a rush. Time must be taken for collaboration with others whose experience and expertise are valued resources that ensure sustainable futures for our young. As with the next steps to build school/community/business partnerships may the waves be a gentle evolution rather than sweeping waves of change.

References

- Beatty, B. (2007). Leadership that gets at the heart of school renewal. *The Australian Journal of Education*, 51(3), 328-342.
- Caldwell, B. (2007). Educational leadership and school renewal: Introduction. *The Australian Journal of Education*, 51(3), 225,226.
- Goodson, I. & Hargreaves, A. (2003). *Professional knowledge, professional lives: Studies in education and change*. Berkshire, Open University Press
- Kostogriz, A. & Peeler, E. (2004). Professional identity and pedagogical space: Negotiating difference in teacher workplace. *Paper presented at the AARE Conference, Melbourne*
- Lankshear, C., Snyder, I., & Green, B. (2000). *Teachers and techno-literacy: Managing literacy, technology and learning in schools*. St Leonards, NSW: Allen & Unwin
- Mahood, S, Moyle, C. & Murray K. (1973). The Control of Education – The role of Parents and the Community. *Proceedings of seminar held at St Mary's College, University of Melbourne 4th May*
- Simanungkalit, T., & Moyle, C. (1987). *Community participation in planning and management of educational resources: A Government of Indonesia/UNDP/UNESCO project* (pp. 10): Institute of Educational Administration.
- Shears, L. W. (1952). The dynamics of leadership in adolescent school groups. *Unpublished thesis, London University, London*
- Shears, L. W. (1961, 24th June). *Qualities of an administrator*, Hobart
- Shears, L. W. (1975), Schools growth is rapid, *The Age*, 4th August 1975
- Shears, L. W. (1975). Address to annual conference of technical schools association. *Paper presented at the Technical Education: School and Working Life, Whitehills Technical College*
- Shears, L. W. (1976). Address to teachers and parents (pp. 10): *In-Service Seminar, Ararat*
- Shears, L. W. (1985). 35th Frank Tate Memorial Lecture: Reflections of an optimist: A future for education. *VIER Bulletin, Issue 55*, 1-30
- Waugh M N (1987). A History of Community Involvement in Victorian State Schools. *Unpublished doctoral thesis, Monash University*
- Wenger, E. (1998). *Communities of practice: Learning, meaning, and identity*. New York: Cambridge University.
- Transcripts of selected interviews conducted by the author Dr Eleanor Peeler with Lawrie Shears and participants in a University of Melbourne biographical/history of Lawrie Shears' life and career

