

WINDOWS INTO THE PAST: NARRATIVE INSIGHTS INTO EDUCATION

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Abstract

The intent of this paper is to stress the importance of narrative and story, and to share the experience of opening the windows of memory to look into the past and uncover fascinating and valuable histories as portrayed in a current study.

The longitudinal study of an educator follows his life story and his role in education. Set in Victoria, it explores the founding of the State's education system and highlights progressive developments. The life story reveals the history of the system and evolving philosophies that influenced the life of the subject. The study considers the philosophies and how they influenced the subject's thinking and actions.

Using windows as a metaphor, Part 1 of the paper includes discussion regarding the appropriacy of narrative as a research tool, considers the notion of memory and introduces the research subject. Part 2 gives insights into three distinct periods and the part played by three men who guided Victoria's educational development and growth throughout the twentieth century. In relation to each is a brief discussion of their influence on the career of the research subject.

Windows into the past

While the story of the narratives holds interest, the process of narrative inquiry is a valuable tool for research. The intent of this paper is to stress the importance of narrative and story, and to share the experience of opening the windows of memory to look into the past and uncover fascinating and valuable histories.

The paper is based on a longitudinal study of an educator and his life in education. Set in Victoria, Australia, it explores the founding of the State's education system and follows its progressive development. The history of the system and philosophies held over time influenced the life of the subject; hence this paper considers how he benefited by policies established in the early years of the twentieth century and in turn developed policies to align with a growing and changing education system.

Self-narratives of the subject, Dr Lawrie Shears, shared through interview and conversation, were supported by interviews with colleagues, friends and family. In turn this led to an exploration of Victoria's education system. As a starting point, to understand its progressive development, the study began with the 1872 Education Act when education in Victoria became compulsory, secular and free. It considers effects of the 1910 Education Act and subsequent growth of secondary schooling, its gradual expansion and state-wide. Such developments benefited students who wished to progress beyond school leaving age of fourteen and achievement of the Merit Certificate that marked the end of Year 8. Subsequently the war and the Depression hampered educational growth until the population boom after World War 2 posed new challenges. In ensuing years expansion challenged administrators, not just to keep pace but to plan ahead.

Windows into the past, as presented in this paper, considers three historic periods of educational

history: the early years of the twentieth century when policies implemented in 1910 founded secondary education for all; the 1950s when governments and administrators endeavoured to keep ahead of growth; and the 1970s when the subject was appointed Victoria's senior administrator.

Education during the twentieth century grew from an organization that presented predominantly primary schooling to one that offered secondary education to all and initiated post-secondary pathways. Over the years administrators proposed change from its highly centralised structure to one of empowerment to school communities. From 1902 when Frank Tate, the first Director, was appointed until 1973, when Dr Lawrie Shears took command, just six others had held the senior administrative post. After a brief introduction to him as the subject of research the paper outlines the rationale for using narratives to trigger the study and in turn outlines the selected historic periods.

Windows into the subject's life

Lawrence William Shears was born in 1921. He first went to school on his sixth birthday. After completing primary schooling and attaining his Merit Certificate (on completion of Grade 8) he was ready for work. Unlike his parents he had the opportunity arose to continue to secondary school and on its completion he entered the teaching profession. Two years served as a student teacher preceded twelve-months study at Melbourne Teachers' College where after twelve months study he attained his Trained Primary Teachers' Certificate. Awarded an extension to university Shears began degrees in Arts and Commerce. Keen to get into the classroom he left university and the teachers' college but like so many continued to study while he taught at a rural central school, a regional high school and a facility to train ex-servicemen. Seconded to the Department of Agriculture in 1947, Shears was appointed Second-In-Charge of the Rural Training Centre, an annex attached to Dookie Agricultural College. The challenge and gratification of this are another story but in 1950 he was awarded degrees in Arts and Commerce and attained his Bachelor of Education.

Shears' promise as teacher, researcher and administrator facilitated the chance to travel abroad to undertake Doctoral studies at the Institute of Education at the University of London in 1950. This in turn paved the way for lectureships at teachers' colleges, prestigious positions at the time, until the opportunity arose to move into administration in 1954. Working side-by-side with the Director of Education Alan Ramsay he was involved in the post-war expansion of schooling. In the 1960s, aged 39, he shifted back to educating others, teachers-to-be, who studied either a two-year Trained Primary Teachers' Certificate or the three-year Trained Infant Teachers' Certificate. During almost a decade as teachers' college principal Shears strove to develop teacher education to university standard and improve the status of teachers and teaching. Active in research, he stimulated interest among college staff and students. In 1969 he moved into senior administration as Assistant Director-General of Education (Planning) and in 1973 was appointed to the system's most senior post, Director-General of Education.

Windows into the research approach

When I embarked on a project to write the biography, Dr Lawrie Shears and I held discussion with Professor Field Rickards, the Dean of the Graduate School of Education at the University of Melbourne. Dr Shears spoke of a biography while the dean spoke of a history of education. At the time I wondered how to combine the two but retrospectively realise that each is integral to the other. Although Educational History was a new genre I bravely accepted the task. Set within the timeframe of Shears' life, the story of education as I researched began almost fifty years before his birth.

To relate the narrative I began from the subject's perspective, heard it first hand, from the horse's mouth so to speak. Beginning with a series of recorded interviews my horizon broadened from narratives he shared, extending to those told by others who lived through corresponding times. I

listened and learned. Throughout his career Shears was passionate about improving the quality and standards of teacher education, satisfying the needs of students in schools and providing post secondary pathways. The influence of his own schooling played a significant part.

As my knowledge and confidence grew the interviews became less formal. Conversational in nature and at times debatable, I still sought knowledge, but had authority to question and share. Equipped with the musings of my subject and forty others I compiled gathered a puzzle, like a field of patches, to be shaped into the biographical history I envisaged. The perspective of each interviewee created a valuable piece to form the historic landscape on which the life of the subject was portrayed. Multidimensional and confusing at times, the patches, like planes of a crystal (Richardson, 2000 p. 934) combined 'symmetry and substance with an infinite variety of shapes, substance, transmutations ... and angles of approach'. They gave valuable insights into the social world of the times and of the other whose life I sought to comprehend.

To complete my understanding I searched through Shears' personal files, bookshelves and diaries, hunted in libraries and archives, and delved into political records. In addition to 'the business of hearing, collecting, interpreting and representing the narratives', in accordance with Chase (2005, p 658), I sought interconnectedness, an 'amalgam of interdisciplinary analytical lenses, diverse disciplinary approaches, and both traditional and innovative methods – all revolving around an interest in the biographical particulars as narrated by the one who lives them' (p. 652).

Though unaware at the time, my approach resembled Plummer's (1983) description for life history research that resulted in a 'full length book's account of one person's life'. 'Gathered over a number of years with gentle guidance', tape recorded interviews with the subject preceded 'interviews with friends and perusal of letters and photographs', 'observation of the subject's life' (p. 14), plus considerable research. Complexity increased with new insights and a mountain of writing by journalists on education and copies of addresses given by Shears over several years.

Most of the interviewees were merely names when we met, initially by phone when I explained my position. The cloak of researcher from the University of Melbourne and the subject's endorsement gave me courage in view of their seniority, rank and public profile. Meeting former educational leaders, politicians and even State Premiers as I presented myself we interpreted each other, established degrees of affinity (Gee, 2001) in the relationship. The nature of our relationship affected the degree of mutuality, or affinity we established, and ability to share common ground (Alfred, 2001). The relationship influenced what was spoken, particularly as we were strangers whose ensuing interactions were unpredictable (Denzin, 1997).

During the interview participants introduced themselves, discussed their role in education and shared insights into the life of Shears from the perspective of administrator, politician, teacher, unionist or member of parent organizations. Affiliation, values, interests and beliefs intermingled (Ivanic, 1997) as positions of knowledge giver and knowledge receiver responded to situational swings, turn-taking, time constraints (Kostogriz & Peeler, 2004) and on one occasion the dog.

Beyond enlightening me to the history of education, the stories shared were 'a handshake across time' (Holmes, 2000, cited in Niall, 2007). The past took on a new reality; people whose names I had only heard became real. Viewed through multiple lenses, the amalgam of narratives gave richness and depth (Chase, 2005, pp. 656-658) to the story of Shears and the history. Each viewpoint helped create an educational landscape, and as I worked my way through this tangled web, the cultural commentary illuminated institutional values of 'our Department', the day-to-day practices of those employed, customs, traditions and group consciousness of the organisation (Goodson, 2003). The stories highlighted tensions, intrinsic to those involved and opposition to those who stepped out of line. Shears' career escalation to administration was seen as divergent; those who followed traditional paths of promotion resented his rapid advancement. The process of deciphering fragments involved making connections, not merely present sequential events. It required integrity to interpret events and explore the subject's and others' actions, emotions and thoughts. The culmination of this involved shaping the life, developing an authorial tone, and a narrative stance. It was necessary to position myself as

'knower and teller' (Richardson, p. 930), look 'inwards as well as outwards' scrutinise self-bias and remain aware of whose life I portrayed (Niall, 2007).

Two particular cases illustrate the to-ing and fro-ing and the unexpected: the Honourable Lindsay Thompson, formerly Minister of Education and later Premier of Victoria, and Dr Phillip Law, Antarctic explorer who later served as senior administrator of the Victoria Institute of Colleges. Both had worked closely with Shears, both interviews took precisely 30 minutes, and were preceded by coffee and brief conversation. During discussion with Thompson his wife was present. It was a cordial meeting and his stories resembled his published memoirs. Conversation extended beyond the recording and I kept in touch. Lindsay, as he asked me to call him, was interested and keen to help. The encounter with Law was more formal; however he extended my knowledge landscape and referred to disagreements with Shears. Both strong leaders, he and Shears frequently held opposing views, such as the place of teachers' colleges and their funding in the spectrum of tertiary education. Their views differed too on the structure of the proposed fourth university, which became Deakin. After thirty minutes Law got up, turned on the TV and watched the cricket. I thanked him and saw myself out.

Windows into the legitimacy of memory

The legitimacy of memory conjures possible shortcomings in narrative studies. Regardless, a glimpse through windows into the past reveals a different social, political and economic milieu of education. Narrative truths, defined by Ellis and Bochner (2000 cited in Richardson), accept that memories shared in self-stories do not merely mirror the past; they raise questions regarding the consequences of the story. Notions of memory influence the stories, as in the case of Minister Thomson, and the tendency to retell the familiar. Likewise, through the duration of the research, Shears preferred to retell the familiar, so insight of others and continued research were fundamental. Stories such as those shared by Dr Law offer the chance to extend the boundaries and reveal something new. The power of colliding narratives required research to question, probe and interpret the story. Countless research hours offset the tendency of the familiar, review memory lapses and explore opposing views.

Frequently the stories portrayed romantic constructions of self (Ellis and Bochner, cited in Richardson 2000). Shears, Director-General, shared his achievements but masked mistakes or difficult times. While interviews with others and research unveiled these, the process of relating the life and facing the discomfort released the protective shield that had concealed past hurt. Researching the wounded leader, as described by Ackerman and Maslin-Ostrowski (2002), embraced the emotional dimension of leadership and of the interview process. It was a time when past wounds can heal, when the subject comes to terms with bitter events and unspeakable moments can be shared. In the current study I initially had to 'pussy-foot' around events that changed the law in 1981 and removed the Director-General from office. Insights from various vantage points, and bringing the event into the open supported the healing process.

The focus of the paper now turns to look through windows into the era of Director Tate (1902-1928), the years of Director Alan Ramsay (1950s) and the term of Director-General Lawrie Shears (1973-82).

Windows into the early years of the twentieth century: Frank Tate (1864-1939)

The legacy of Frank Tate was his drive to establish secondary education for all. It has been widely acclaimed and marks a milestone in educational history. His career began in 1873 when aged thirteen years he was appointed pupil teacher (fourth class). After four years he entered the Training Institute in Melbourne to complete a two-year teacher training course. He progressed traditionally through positions of teacher, Inspector, teachers' college lecturer, and principal of Melbourne Teachers' College in 1900. Due to depression in the 1890s, money for education had been drastically cut. Like teachers' colleges in Ballarat and Bendigo it had been closed.

Tate wanted the College to be 'the powerhouse of educational reform' in the 'mould of the New Education'. Aware of trends interstate and overseas he believed Victoria was lagging behind (Selleck, 1972, p. 125). He envisaged a more liberal curriculum and imaginative approaches to teach the three Rs. Tate opposed the practice of payment-by-results. He believed it encouraged rote learning, curbed the curriculum, stifled individuality and limited learning potential. Knowledge empowered young minds in interesting, active, perceptual and interconnected learning processes. Counter to social and political sway, he supported liberal alternatives and encouraged sensitivity, harmony and individual development (Selleck, 1982, p.69).

Traditionally church and private groups provided the bulk of secondary education in Victoria. Tate's views regarding a government system of secondary schools tallied with appraisal by the Fink Royal Commission (1899-1901) of technical education, a review that embraced Victoria's entire Education Department. The Commission recognized the economic benefit of an educated society wherein each additional year proportionately raised the standard of national efficiency and increased powers of production. It recommended to free the Department of public service control and made provision for 'higher primary' pupils to be educated beyond Grade 6 in continuation schools (Blake, 1973, Vol., Garden, 1982).

In 1902 Tate was appointed Secretary of the Education Department; a position later renamed Director. Upon his appointment the Education Department employed 5066 teachers to educate 228,241 children in 1947 schools. He was scathing of a 'narrowly educated and ill-trained' lot, only 7 per cent of teachers had College qualifications, 41 per cent were classified as pupil-teachers, monitors or sewing mistresses, and 50 per cent had a License to Teach. He claimed he 'inherited plant and personnel which were seriously deficient', a downhearted teacher workforce and a resentful team of Inspectors, many of whom resisted change (Selleck, 1982, pp. 136-141). Subsequently his insistence for the registration of teachers led to the *Registration of Teachers and Schools Act (1905)*.

Throughout the early years of the twentieth century Victoria's economy was dependent on agriculture. Beyond the provision of agricultural education was a move to establish a system of government secondary schooling accessible to all. Pioneering schooling beyond the primary years at continuation and agricultural high schools Tate by-passed the non-government sector, traditional providers of secondary education. He affirmed that 'the powers of the Education Department should allow the State to supervise continuation and secondary schools. He witnessed his dream when *The Education Act 1910* gave authority to establish higher elementary schools; continuation classes; preparatory trade classes, trade schools and technical schools. This he believed was 'the most important legislative enactment concerning education since the passing of the Principal Act in 1872' (Report of Minister 1910-11, Appendix C p. 43, cited in Blake Vol 1 p 459). No longer teacher did district high schools merely bridge the gap between primary and early secondary schooling or suffice as institutions for teacher training or agricultural studies.

Influence on Shears

Philosophies of education instilled at the teachers' college benefited Shears' schooling (1927-38) and subsequent teacher training. The development of secondary education enabled his shift from Elsternwick Primary to University High School. At Elsternwick Headmaster Anton Vroland was a leading light and Headmaster Mathew Stanton Sharman played a similar role at University High.

Succeeding Tate as College Principal, Dr John Smyth (1902-27), selected high calibre graduates aware of developing educational trends who harboured exploration, intellectual activity and explanation. He espoused that teachers drop 'classical bookishness and gear themselves to the needs of modern technological society', and their teaching embrace 'all round development of the child' (Edgar, 1967). The influences of experimentation, child-centeredness and New Education Fellowship philosophies swayed staff. They supported individualism and flexibility of student movement, as in Winnetka and Dalton approaches, and Dewey's project method. Affirmation that education focus on the child was reflected in the philosophies of A.J. Law (1939- 1950), College Principal when Shears was a student teacher. He argued, 'Give the child freedom ... retire to the background; be ready to give help and

guidance when the demand for these is urgent but do nothing for the child which he can do for himself' (Education Gazette, July 1920, cited in Blake, 1973, Vol 1, p. 364).

Ripples from Tate's work, the introduction of secondary schooling for all, registration of teachers and philosophies injected by the New Education Fellowship influenced the education system, its teachers and pupils. War (1914-18) had caused disruption and the Depression halted growth. War again in 1939 triggered an acute crisis in teacher supply as many practising and would-be teachers enlisted.

Windows into the 1950s: Major-General Sir Alan Hollick Ramsay CBE (1895-1973)

Appointed Director of Education in Victoria in January 1948, Major-General Alan Hollick Ramsay's (later Sir) WW1 record revealed an exceptional man, and respected leader who carried things through. His teaching career began in 1912 with a three-year apprenticeship as a Junior Teacher. On graduation he was appointed a rural Head Teacher but when WW1 broke out he enlisted as an AIF gunner. After his release he taught at inner suburban schools and University High School (1925-27) before appointments to lecture the Melbourne University School of Education and Melbourne Teachers' College (1928-39). Ramsay enlisted again in WW2 and served in North Africa, New Guinea and New Britain, achieved the rank of Major General and was awarded the CBE. After the war he was appointed Principal of Melbourne High School in 1946, and became Director of Education two years later. His proven ability to lead troops and his knowledge of education positioned him to direct education in Victoria through more than a decade of extraordinary growth (Blake, 1973, Vol. 1, pp. 1492-3).

Ramsay guided educational planning into the mid-1950s during a period of extraordinary population growth, yet Ministerial instability. Brigadier Raymond Tovell (Liberal Minister of Public Instruction 1948-50, Minister of Education in October 1952) was alert to the shortage of teachers and school accommodation; the Percival Inghold (Country Party 1950-52) warned of problems associated with excessive growth; Alfred Shepherd (Cain Labor 1952-1955) sought to revitalize the building program, Sir William Leggatt (Bolte Liberal 1955-1956). Sir John Bloomfield's (1956-67) eleven-year term was a sign of stability.

Post war Australia underwent rapid change. Its population grew in size and diversity. In the intensity of nation building and reconstruction, education was the key to economic growth and full employment. Paralleling demand for primary, secondary and tertiary education was the upsurge in knowledge and technological advance. An evolution stirred 'the irresistible forces of change that promise[d] to transform beyond recognition not only a vast continent but its people' (Jackson, 1962, pp. 31, cited in Connell, 1983). The force held promise yet had the capacity to create 'educational turmoil'. A decline in the industrial workforce and rise of salaried middle classes underlay social shifts, which altered traditional patterns of schooling. Young people stayed longer at school, their right, according to visiting educator R. Freeman Butts, a graduate of the University of Wisconsin on a Fulbright Grant to study education in Australia. Though viewing the system 'with an outlook conditioned by his own culture', he advocated government schooling for all. Butts censured the apathy among leaders and urged for 'a great educational revival and awakening of interest in education' (Butts, 1955, pp 77-79). Seemingly harsh in the light of the post war crisis, Butt's criticism alerted to the enormity of the task ahead and the intensifying pace of change.

Developments throughout the 1950s propelled nation-wide industrial 'take-off'. People held hope and the benefits of high employment with minimal inflation. Home building and home ownership sustained momentum as urbanization extended along growth corridors. Population growth due to migration, rising birth rates, and the increasing tendency to stay at school beyond leaving age of fifteen placed pressure on the education system and its administrators. The mounting prestige of education reflected a 'revolution in rising expectations' as Australian society realized the benefits of educational investment and employment opportunities (Bessant & Spaul, 1976, pp. 80,81). Although the relationship between schooling and social mobility and the value of technical knowledge was

clear, Victoria's swelling population and demand for schooling outweighed the Education Department's ability to cope. Administrators faced unparalleled challenge to purchase land in growth corridors, plan and erect new schools and add classrooms to alleviate overcrowding.

In 1954 Shears was appointed to the position of Survey and Planning Officer. By then 235,439 pupils attended Victorian primary schools. Numbers tapered off in the higher grades. 66,652 in Grade 1 decreased to 27,519 by Grade 6 and 750 by Grade 8. Similarly numbers reduced in secondary schools in which 67,554 students attended high and junior technical schools, central classes attached to primary schools and central and higher elementary schools. The Department established nine new high schools in 1954, twenty-seven new primary schools and a girls' secondary school, and made extensions to existing schools. Momentum gained with eight new high schools founded in 1955, followed in 1956 with thirteen, two girls' secondary schools and the raising to high school status of four higher elementary schools. A retrospective glance shows that the anticipated increase of 6,000 pupils in 1958 became 7,500 and growth in 1959 exceeded 10,000 (Report to Minister 1957-58 by Assistant Chief Inspector of Secondary Schools Alec McDonnell p 24, cited in Blake, 1973, Vol. 1 p 532).

Through the 1950s into the 1960s building demands were acute and schools designed for 500 pupils accommodated considerably more. To ease the demand for new buildings corrugated iron army huts and prefabricated classrooms became commonplace. With rising enrolments and accommodation already overtaxed, Light Timber Construction (LTC), as Ramsay had observed in the UK in 1948, provided a low cost alternative to 'more orthodox construction' methods (McDonnell, Radford, Staurengi, 1956; Shears, 2007). Standardized units naturally lit, efficiently warmed and speedily constructed were an immediate solution to put pupils in classrooms. In ensuing years they were assembled in modules of four, six, eight or twelve and thus distributed State funds to service a greater number of building projects.

Low birth rate during the Depression and war years and competition from more lucrative professions had affected teacher supply, despite a boost in the number of trainee teachers. To alleviate the shortage the Education Department founded nine new colleges during the 1950s. Reopening Bendigo and Ballarat Teachers Colleges in the mid-1940s and conversion of the Secondary Teachers' Training Centre to the Secondary Teachers' College gave a total of twelve. Employment of temporary teachers filled the immediate void while married women, no longer employable in a permanent capacity according to regulation, provided a rich source of would-be teachers. Under ongoing and increasing pressure the *Teacher Service (Married Women) Act (1956)* granted permanency to 120 women, some had held 'temporary' positions. Unlike new recruits assigned to remote corners of the state, their preference to teach close to home exacerbated shortages in country regions.

Influence on Shears

The chance to serve as Survey and Planning Officer during that time of growth was fortuitous for Shears. He stepped into a position previously held by David Satchell. Foundations were laid. At just thirty-five he held responsibility for planning schools and teachers' colleges, and developing teachers' professional knowledge through comprehensive provision of in-service education. By travelling the state to survey the system he gained an overall insight into its functioning, the needs of teachers and students in rural, regional and metropolitan schools. Working beside the Director or stepping into the his shoes, he had a view from the top.

Abreast of college building, teacher recruitment and training problems, Shears was in a position to advise. Teacher education required an overhaul. Representing Ramsay as Secretary, Advisory Committee on Teacher Training he worked with others to alleviate the serious shortages among secondary graduates and support curriculum development in teacher training courses. Lack of suitable staff in colleges hindered a complete overhaul and despite the extension of primary and infant courses, principals claimed that preparation remained inadequate. In his 1956-57 Report Minister Bloomfield claimed, 'a shortage of teachers in almost all subjects of the curriculum ... the position is likely to

remain difficult for some years.¹ The teacher shortage was critical. Plans to recruit trained teachers from Scotland and England to alleviate serious shortfalls in Maths and Science were not carried through (Report of Minister of Education 1956-57 p 27, cited in Blake p 537). Employment of under-qualified teachers was a major concern though the *Education Act (1958)* stipulated, 'No person shall be registered as a teacher unless he produces evidence which satisfies the Council of his fitness to teach' the crisis called for desperate measures.

The building of schools and supply of suitably qualified teachers continued to hamper educational development. After his appointment as Principal, Burwood Teachers' College (1961-69) Shears continued the thrust to improve courses and upgrade qualifications to provide better-qualified workforce. Teacher education was influenced by his own schooling, training and classroom experience, plus knowledge gained in Survey and Planning, his doctoral studies and views from abroad. In 1968 basic training for primary teachers became a three-year diploma rather than a two-year certificate.

Windows into the 1970s: Lawrence William Shears (1973-82)

On 5th May 1973, Dr Lawrence Shears became Victoria's eighth educational leader. Victoria's population had reached 3,628,000 and the Education Department was among the nation's top employers. The largest business enterprise in the state it managed 45% of Victoria's budget. The Department regulated four fifths of Victoria's schools, employed fourth fifths of its teachers and educated four fifths of its students (Commonwealth Year Book, 1974, p. 665). The Director-General of Education was responsible to 'administer an organization spending \$465M, employing 62,000 persons, owning 2289 separate buildings and educating 678,000 students' (Shears, 1973).

Throughout his term Shears recognized Tate as a fine administrator of considerable community status. He acknowledged Tate's drive to develop secondary education 'for the people' and established three teaching divisions 'each with their own set of powers'. A man of 'initiative ... willing to serve, but not stand still ... [who] to the end he retained his enthusiasm'. Shears aspired to similar ideals. The Education Department's permanent head, like Tate he rose through the ranks, became a 'Little God Almighty' atop Victoria's education empire and held 'the responsibility of administering all Acts in any way relating to Education'.

A Press Release introduced forty-nine year old Shears as the 'youngest Director-General of Education since the legendary Frank Tate'. It acknowledged Shears' 'contributions to educational theory and practice [had] established him in the academic world as an internationally respected authority'. It paid tribute to his contributions to establish the International Teaching Fellowship, recruit overseas teachers to satisfy shortage and advocacy for the State College of Victoria. The report identified that 'under the administration of Dr Shears, one would expect an emphasis on transferring decision-making to the school level' and noted that he proposed to make regular visits to schools state-wide, be readily accessible, and establish and maintain a smooth working relationship with teachers, parents, civic, and other organizations interested in education (Shears, 2005).

Upholding that 'change is inevitable, desirable change is not', Shears aimed to make the inevitable change desirable. He saw the future as a modified past 'given magnetism by our hopes and aspirations. Futures for all things suffer from the pressures of tradition, habit and a general resistance to change.' Yet, acknowledging the inevitability of change he recognized the turbulent path ahead. Nevertheless he was cautious of political, social and economic forces with power to constrain. He envisaged 'teachers and children milling around at the crossroads': downhill lay confusion, frustration and chaos stirred by politically vigorous minority groups; uphill lay 'restored public confidence, professional unity and status ... personal satisfaction and effective teaching.' Seeking a better qualified and higher

¹ Report of Minister 1958-59, p 30, cited in Blake Vol. 1 p. 357; overseas recruitment through the Agent General's Office in London

salariied workforce and curriculum revision to support each student achieve optimal performance he intended to follow the uphill road (Shears, undated).

The tides turned politically in December 1972 when the Whitlam Labor government ended the Liberal's twenty-three year rule. The new government challenged controversial issues, abolished the death penalty, ended conscription and established Legal Aid. Whitlam took the inaugural Prime Ministerial tour of China, purchased Blue Poles for Australian National Gallery (\$AUS1.3 million - \$US2 million), proposed Advance Australia Fair to replace God Save the Queen, and the Albury/Wodonga precinct. Following Cyclone Tracy on Christmas Eve 1974, the Whitlam government relocated 33,000 people and coped with the damage debt of \$837 million. Not long into Office, global forces in the form of the oil crisis and serious economic downturn dashed Whitlam's aspirations.

Despite ill clouds the new government pushed on. It abolished university fees and established the Tertiary Education Assistance Scheme (TEAS), later Austudy. Chaired by Professor Peter Karmel an Interim Committee surveyed educational needs nationwide. In response it planned a 'suite of educational programs' and an Australian Schools Commission, and maintained the status quo of 'free, secular and compulsory' education. National educational goals were equality, devolution of authority, community involvement and sensitivity to change. They challenged social issues, questioned administrative structures and intended that 'the educational needs of children in relation to desired outcomes are more effectively served' (McKinnon, 2010).

These ideals were compatible with emerging trends and in line with Shears' vision; however they overlay his own aspirations and ability to act. As educational boundaries between State and Commonwealth blurred, Shears and his administrative team juggled parallel agendas. Upon Commonwealth directive State Education Departments established task forces to evaluate administration and survey schools to assess needs. During June 1973 members met senior administrators and representatives of parent and teacher organizations to survey the entire education system; its operations, facilities, standards, documentation, predictions, communications and costs.

Midst these goings-on Shears presented 'Educational Wisdom; Adminastrative Muddle', published in *The Age*. He applauded the statement of needs but criticised Commonwealth inroads into the State's educational domain and resultant to-ing and fro-ing that affected progress. The proposal that state committees supervise proceedings 'was an administration muddle in the sense that you couldn't have two groups determining what would happen with the allocation of Federal money through the Schools Commission or any other Federally oriented source' (*The Age*, 19th June 1973). Foreseeing 'an administrative machine which may be either inoperable or ineffective' prompted discussion amongst members of the Australian Education Council (Shears, 2004). State Directors-General reiterated concern over Commonwealth infringement, restrictions on spending and overlap between existing and proposed programs. Each State was 'desperate for money for schools, libraries and science blocks' and though Commonwealth funds buoyed education its intrusion created 'mini-departments' and a new layer of complexity (Shears, 2004).

A tier beneath the Minister, the Director-General virtually ruled Victoria's educational empire. The permanent head, he was subject to the Minister, responsible to administer the Act and obliged to offer advice on issues at stake. Atop of the educational hierarchy he was betwixt the continuity of tradition and the needs of a changing world. Continuity lay in maintaining the Department's linear structure with decision-making remote from the action in schools. In line with Commonwealth predictions he sought to soften administrative boundaries, and disperse powers laterally through regions to schools. It was important to bridge a link between policy makers, teacher trainers, teachers, schools and their communities to enhance opportunities and maximise each student's potential. To boost teachers' professional status he believed four-year training was fundamental to founding a registered body. Quin-trainian or five year planning was crucial. He proposed a system-wide restructure with a bigger administrative team and acknowledging the scope of administration at all levels emphasised the value of leadership training (Shears, 2007).

Fired with ambition Shears endeavoured to guide the inevitable change. To establish his vision and its implementation he wrote five directional papers, which he methodically presented for scrutiny throughout the educational fraternity and community wide. Concerned by the gap between policy-makers and the action in schools, he supported the regional shift and encouraged school community partnerships. Spreading the power base buoyed autonomy and leadership potential.² Alert to the political implications of his actions he challenged the forces of tradition. Despite the pressures of legislative constraints, a more vocal educational community and increasingly interested public Shears footprints on education in Victoria are evident today. Like Tate he had vision and energy, 'like a battery-powered rabbit', one participant said. He saw and was seen, visited schools state-wide, attended and addressed conferences, and scoured the international scene.

Windows on narrative insights

Though not the end of the story, this history unfolded was triggered by narrative, simple interviews to begin with plus research as the story took shape. Patches placed together formed a patchwork of educational history, told through the life of a man who played a major role in developing today's education system. The patches placed in order shaped a life story and a history of education. As they triggered research into the legitimacy of the narrative revelations, I traced multiple educational histories, one of which has been shared in this paper. But so what of Shears you may ask?

Political, economic and social change had reshaped the nation. The increasing momentum within Shears' lifetime shifted the economy base from agriculture and manufacturing. Traditional technical training became obsolete and employment patterns changed. At the century's dawning Frank Tate laid the foundations for others to build on, mid century Ramsay built on these as provision of secondary education boomed. In turn, during 40 years' service in education, significantly as senior administrator, Shears laid foundations that influenced ongoing development of Victoria's education system. With each turn of the page he had played a part: the war years and post war expansion; provision and training of teachers; devolution of power, school council governance by principals, teachers, parents and pupils and the school-community thrust. He led a diverse team that stirred the department and carried bureaucracy to support essential change. With this in motion he remained optimistic and looked ahead.

Shears' legacies lie in the development of schools, teachers' colleges and training institutions during Victoria's post war years, the transition of teacher education and advancement of courses from certificate to university level. Life-long learning among professionals and in the community was important. He was committed to in-service education and higher degrees for teachers, and developments in Colleges of Adult Education and Technical And Further Education institutions. To advance in their profession and knowledge he encouraged teachers to travel and study abroad. In the process of devolving central authority he softened the boundaries between the school and community, gave credit to parental contributions and had faith to set in train the process that granted autonomy to school councils. Above all the student lay at the heart of concerns, whether a child in the classroom, a school leaver who tried to select the appropriate post-secondary pathway or an adult returning to study. The needs of individuals remained important and despite the size of the Education Department, he tried to make himself available to hear and respond to concerns.

Windows opened to me through a process of narrative inquiry have given light to recent histories of schooling, revealed knowledge of noteworthy educators and insight to some remarkable stories.

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