

# ***The Transformative Capacity of New Learning***

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# The Transformative Capacity of New Learning

*The students of the 21<sup>st</sup> century can actively create the communities in which they live and learn, rather than live on the margins of those they inherit.*

## Introduction

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This paper addresses the broad implications for educators of the knowledge society. These include the extent to which knowledge can be viewed as separate from social and psychological aspects of learning and teaching, the reshaping of curricula and the core understandings, skills and attitudes which educators require in this context. We argue for the conceptualization of new learning as necessarily connected not only to cognitive, social and psychological aspects of teaching and learning but also more broadly to society and communities. The transformation of individuals and society is a highly desirable outcome of educational reform. To that end we argue for the following four key elements:

1. Quality of engagement with knowledge;
2. The deepening of teachers' functions, especially as learning mentors;
3. Enhanced capacity for imagination, innovation and creativity;
4. The primacy of relationships as part of the transformative capacity of new learning.

For the purposes of this paper, transformative experiences are defined as those which occur with sufficient emotional intensity to be meaningful, and with sufficient cognitive patterning to organize thinking and learning in deeply significant ways.

In elaborating these we discuss the role of reflection in a transformative model and outline some of the challenges this new learning poses for teacher education and professional development. In section 5, we discuss some ways in which the school curriculum is changing to accommodate this approach.



## Quality of engagement with knowledge

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The quality of engagement with knowledge in learning and teaching is sometimes overlooked in descriptions of the knowledge society. Often, knowledge is described as either technocratic or traditional and the juxtaposition with society and contexts is ignored. We argue that the context in which knowledge is attained influences and shapes the quality of the meanings it generates. Also intertwined in this process are learners' personal qualities of motivation, self concept and self esteem.

For students, learning means understanding themselves both as individuals and as members of family, social and global communities. Understanding, which subsumes knowledge and embeds it within individuals' thoughts, feelings and values, enhances the potential for learning to be transformative. The students of the 21<sup>st</sup> century can actively create the communities in which they live and learn, rather than live on the margins of those they inherit.

Recent research undertaken by the Centre for the Wider Benefits of Learning at the Institute of Education at London University provides some useful insights here. Their model – *Triangular Conceptualization of the Social Benefits of Learning* (Schuller et al, 2002, p.10) – highlights personal identity, human capital and social capital. These they elaborate with a number of individual attributes: self-concept; plans/goals; enjoyment; motivation to learn; attitudes and values (e.g. trust); health; family; friends/networks and civic participation; skills; knowledge; and qualifications.

The triangular model, including as it does social and human capital as well as personal identity, directs attention to both the individual and societal benefits of learning. While qualifications and employability skills may benefit the individual, their benefit to the common good is also valued. That good is perceived as including complex psychological and personal benefits which in turn contribute to both individual and societal well-being.

In his model of systemic transformation, Barber (2000) labels Australia, England and the United States as the educational transformers; Ireland and Scotland as the adaptors; Bavaria and The Netherlands as the high maintainers and Singapore and Switzerland as the reformers. He poses five strategic challenges for those who seek to build or maintain flexibility and capacity for transformation while simultaneously improving student outcomes. Barber's five challenges are: reconceptualising teaching; creating high autonomy/high performance schools; building capacity and managing knowledge; establishing new partnerships; and reinventing the role of government. Through all of this Barber emphasizes the need for openness to learning and to change and development by all those involved, making the point that:

*Certainly we should make as much use of the evidence base as we can but it will not be enough. We will also need to use the ingenuity and expertise of people in education systems and elsewhere who are committed to the future success of public education. In short, we need 'faith', the evidence of things not seen (p.170).*

The meaning of education within a global, post industrial, knowledge society must continue to be interrogated. Making education more reflective of, and responsive to, a knowledge society requires considerable shifts in practice, theory and policy. In particular, it requires that research processes and methodologies are sufficiently flexible and responsive to yield the kinds of insights which support transformation and serve the needs of a knowledge society. Such needs might well be embodied within intuitive processes rather than revealed through empirical results alone. The lived experience of learning and knowing can be influential and meaningful, provided learners are encouraged to take the risks involved in experiential learning. In taking such risks courageous teacher-mentors play a significant role.

Experiential learning in schools has been identified most often in vocational education and related work experience, where young people spend a period of time out of the school in the workplace. Often this experience is seen as purely vocational, as distinct from academic. Vocational learning invites a different means of looking at this and other forms of experiential learning, by considering the context as well as the processes and products of all learning opportunities.

As an example, let us consider the position of a young person employed at McDonalds. The proponents of work experience, vocational education and training and accreditation will emphasize the importance of the young person's on-the-job learning in the workplace. They are likely to emphasize documentation around the competencies associated with the work experience, journal keeping, role-plays, problem and project-based learning and assessment according to previously defined competencies. New learning, identified here in vocational learning, can carry us a step further by paying more attention to the 'big ideas', including the global nature of McDonalds and other similar organizations, the impact on the environment of cooking, and a whole range of ideas associated with nutrition, sustainability, economics and environment. The ethical behaviour of company executives and corporate governance can be scrutinised and critiqued. The essential connectedness of employees to every aspect of a corporation's functions can be illustrated.

As such, this example draws on what Young (1998) describes as *connective specialization* which he contrasts sharply with the *divisive specialization* that he suggests underpins academic/vocational divisions. At its simplest, connective specialization enables individual subjects to be viewed from the point of view of the whole curriculum rather than the other way around. In the description below Young presents connective specialization in a way that is more expansive and filled with potential for reconceptualising learning and teaching,



*In the sense used here, connective specialization is concerned with the links between combinations of knowledge and skills in the curriculum and the wider democratic and social goals of education. At the individual level it refers to the need for an understanding of the social, cultural, political and economic implications of any knowledge or skill in its context and how through such a curriculum, an individual can learn specific skills and knowledge but also the capacity to take initiatives and responsibility, whatever her or his specific occupation or position (Young, 1998, p.77).*

In *New Learning: A Charter for Education in Australia*, the Australian Council of Deans of Education (2001) describes characteristics of the new economy and new society and of the new worker, new citizen and new person. Within this context, the ACDE identifies that new basics are emerging to replace the traditional reading, writing and arithmetic, acquired as received facts and demonstrated in regurgitation of rigidly defined truths (p.85). According to the ACDE new learning will be built around knowledge and capability sets, located and transferable learnings and disciplined and reflexive learning. Such descriptors encapsulate the importance of real acknowledgement, understanding and action in learning and teaching within and around contexts defined by ongoing changes in individuals, communities, economies, workplaces, schools and in the world as we may think we know it.

Recent curriculum changes across Australia have seen Queensland include Life Pathways and Social Futures and Active Citizenship; South Australia: Interdependence and Identities; Tasmania: Communicating, Personal Futures, Social Responsibility and World Futures; and Brennan's proposal for ACT High Schools includes community building and learning to live together and with others. Significantly, these emphases follow a preoccupation with those aspects of schooling most easily measurable: English, Mathematics, Technology and Science. The reshaped curricula shift the focus to education's social agenda and its purposes.

A narrow focus on education, training and employment pathways is likely to meet only some of the needs of young people and in so doing overlook social, spiritual and emotional needs. In this light, Abbott's comment (1998) in "Why Good Schools Alone Will Never Be Enough" is important:

*Life is more than work. If we give children the idea that they need high-level skills only for work, we have got it all wrong. They are going to need even higher-level skills to perform in a democratic society. We have got to get this absolutely right: the issue is not technology, but what it means to be human, what kind of future we want for the human race (p.24).*

New Learning shifts the focus from teaching processes and products to the contexts in which learning occurs, the individual characteristics of learners and the quality of their engagement with knowledge.



## **The deepening of teachers' functions, especially as learning mentors**

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The contexts for learning now are recognizably challenging and need to be understood in all their diversity and complexity. This means that interpersonal relationships, their structure, their function, their mutability and their significance in learning contexts have to be acknowledged. This emphasis recognizes that knowledge can be acquired within dynamic contexts which shape meanings in particular ways. We need to know how learners engage (or disengage) with knowledge and contexts and how emotional connectedness is enhanced. In the same way, there is a need to understand the reasons for student disaffection. There is scope for research into teachers' enthusiasm, their capacity to engage both with students and knowledge, their attunement to learners and their expertise in discipline and pedagogy. This is important because in school learning contexts, teachers are powerful role models and have the capacity to create significant intellectual and emotional connectedness between learners and knowledge.

In learning contexts where insight is the desired outcome, teachers play a significant role in guiding students beyond knowledge to insight. Through the development of skills, such as numeracy, literacy, reflective thinking and problem solving they can foster learners' habits of mind and positive emotional dispositions towards insightful, transformative learning. This positions teachers as highly influential in complex learning contexts. And that position is nothing less than is necessary today. If technological advances are used expeditiously and teachers are less shackled by the need to provide students with access to knowledge, their skills in pedagogy can be directed towards higher level thinking abilities, and developing a climate of positive, enthusiastic learning contexts in which rigorous intellectual work can flourish. This in turn will enhance students' self image as effective learners. From such confidence the ability to be self-directed can develop.

### ***The challenges for teacher education and professional development***

Since affective responses and emotional ethos influence context and connectedness with experience, the personal dispositions of hope, resilience, trust and faith need to be recognized as part of an educator's teaching repertoire – not only to enhance students' learning capacity but to model the attributes essential for transformative learning. Teachers need to be sufficiently flexible in their strategies and attuned to learners' affective responses if they are to work across a continuum from belief and confidence to appropriate scepticism and critical thinking. This is occurring within a context where the traditional disciplines are reconceptualised and their contribution to educational theory and practice, reviewed. Current attention to multiple intelligences, social competencies and empathic and emotional intelligence draws on traditional sociological perspectives highlighting social and human capital and shifts the focus from narrowly defined cognitive psychology.

In the transformative model of learning proposed here, teacher education courses need to model and encourage effective practice in dynamic pedagogical processes. These will support teachers to take risks, acknowledge multiple realities, set open-ended tasks, be creative and improvise. Change can only be embraced when practitioners feel confident that the

complexities of their work are widely acknowledged and that the processes of learning are seen as fundamental as their outcomes. It is essential too that there is ongoing dialogue with teacher education course approvals committees and teacher registration boards about the evolving and transdisciplinary nature of teacher education programs. Similarly, higher education selection officers need to become engaged in partnerships with schools and their communities, including parents and employers, if changes in curricula and pedagogy are to be explored. State and Commonwealth education bureaucracies and Faculties of Education need to share expertise and develop national strategies to ensure Australia's improving position as a leader in transformative education in the global community. The recent initiative between the state department of education in Tasmania and the Faculty of Education at The University of Tasmania to work cooperatively on joint projects through a Peak Education Action Committee is an example of "learning together".

### ***The role of reflection in a transformative model***

Much has been written about the function of reflection in learning and pedagogy. To develop the complex skills and attitudes necessary for contemporary education practice, the habit of deep introspection needs to be encouraged. Introspection goes beyond reflection to influence embodied habits of mind. Introspection can transform reflection into the kind of responsiveness which can be flexible and informed by contexts of learning. Those contexts are now recognized as extremely complex and multi-faceted, requiring teachers to have broad repertoires of pedagogical practice.

In an address to the Australian Universities Quality Agency Forum in Brisbane (September 2002), the Secretary of the Department of Education Science and Training, Dr Peter Shergold, spoke on the fact that the focus on quality in learning and teaching is clearly on the Federal Government's agenda. He said that the capacity of teachers "to engage, enthuse and inspire their students is fundamental to the learning experience". The qualities Shergold identified are significant in the concept of 'empathic intelligence' (Arnold, 2000). He spoke further about the need to focus on scholarship in teaching and the development of teaching professionalism.

## **Capacity for imagination, creativity and improvisation**

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In a transformative model of new learning, teachers' and students' capacity for imagination, creativity and improvisation is crucial. Curricula need to be constructed to meet the individual needs of each student, and that imperative alone draws on educators' expertise, high order thinking abilities, creativity and empathic intelligence.

In looking for curriculum changes for the future, attention most often falls on technology and workplace skill development. At the other end of the scale, the arts have for too long been seen as inessential trappings. Interestingly, their relationships with technology and employability continue to grow and their contribution to increasing human and social understandings is clearer now.

While technology holds some of the answers for ways forward, the value of the arts in the education and development of young people cannot be overlooked. As Karen Hamblen noted:

*Like language or mathematics, the arts involve the use of complex symbols to communicate. To attain competence in the arts, it is necessary to gain literacy with these symbol systems. Some, like music and painting, use non-verbal symbols: others, like poetry and song, use language in particular ways (cited in NASAA 1995, p.2).*

Even more importantly, the enhanced social understandings that can result from arts programs have been highlighted. For example, in the American report *Coming Up Taller* (1996) it is stated:

*Because dance, music, photography and other visual arts transcend language, they can bridge barriers among cultural, racial and ethnic groups. The arts can promote a deeper understanding of similarities and differences among religions, races and cultural traditions (p.6).*

As Maxine Greene remarks about the role of imagination in education and life:

*One of the reasons I have come to concentrate on imagination as a means through which we can assemble a coherent world is that imagination is what, above all, makes empathy possible. It is what enables us to cross the empty spaces between ourselves and those we teachers have called 'other' over the years...of all our cognitive capacities, imagination is the one that permits us to give credence to alternative realities' (1995, p.3).*

Hence the role of arts education in enlivening learning. In terms of 'empathic intelligence' (Arnold 2000), the experience of the arts helps create a dynamic between thinking and feeling such that both are mobilized and mutually enriching. As Greene puts it:

*the role of imagination is not to resolve, not to point the way, not to improve. It is to awaken, to disclose the ordinarily unseen, unheard, and unexpected (1995, p.28).*

To understand what is proposed here requires some measure of the very imagination and belief which is being promulgated. It requires a sense of possibility in lived moments and a belief that experience can be multifaceted, complex, idiosyncratic and intensely personal, even in apparently mundane, unpromising moments. In an important sense, imagination can transform the mundane to the poetic. Unless 'knowledge' encompasses experience as part of the knowing, learners will lack the motivation to continue experiencing life in the fullest sense.

Clearly, the most successful school curricula are those that can deliver a range of outcomes and contribute to the development of and expression of such characteristics in learners and teachers.

Most learning occurs before, after and beside the formal learning that occurs in identified education and training institutions. There is immense value in identifying, assessing and making such learning transferable within a commitment to lifelong and lifewide learning. The balance between the active citizenship and social inclusion aspects of lifelong learning and the individual responsibility orientation focus must be problematised. This must address questions of individual benefit and common good; knowledge and qualifications; generic learning abilities and specific competences; economic and caring narratives; individual fulfillment; active citizenship; social inclusion; employability; and mobility. While this is desirable and the terms *lifelong* and *lifewide* learning are used extensively in education today, as Paechter (2001) reminds us, there is still a long way to go:

*Despite recent rhetoric regarding lifelong learning, it seems to be generally accepted both by educationalists and by the general public, that school knowledge is in some way different from that found and used in the world outside (p.168).*

Others are similarly cautious. Chapman et al (2002) have noted that too often lifelong learning is defined simply as lifelong professional learning. They suggest that widespread implementation relies on teacher educators "taking a form of social action" (Beck and Sopp, 1997). This involves movement from the narrow vocational definition of lifelong learning to a:

*multifaceted, integrated orientation ....in which the benefits of lifelong learning are deemed to include improved personal development, a stronger democracy and a more inclusive society as well as a stronger economy (p.142).*

This gap between rhetoric and reality is most clear in the control which universities hold over school curricula. Through their selection procedures they continue to sustain rigid academic interpretations of worthwhile learning and, as such, help shape community values of what is important. The shift in emphases in the curriculum in various Australian states may mean

inevitable change in university approaches to selection, course development, learning and teaching and in their quality of community engagement. It is ironic that universities are as committed to employability outcomes for their graduates, especially in the most high status courses, but often fail to acknowledge the employability skills and knowledge and unpaid family and community work experience that their students bring with them. Better shared understanding of the potential and promise in formal and informal learning may generate considerable change in such practices. For teachers to undertake these approaches in their teaching it is necessary that they have sound and well articulated understandings of the purposes of education and of the need for their ongoing review.

Teacher education is caught in the various changes occurring in the post compulsory years. Through its location in universities it is a participant in changes in higher education, and through its development of prospective teachers and regular involvement in schools it is integrally involved in school level changes. In Victoria alone, these include Middle Years clusters, Early Years Literacy and Numeracy programs, Managed Individual Pathways (MIPS), Vocational Education and Training (VET), Local Learning and Employment Networks (LLENs) and the Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning (VCAL). All of these are oriented towards Government targets of increased school retention rates and expectations that all students will leave school, literate, numerate, socially competent and able to move to further education, training or employment.





## Primacy of relationships

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In this paper, the importance of relationships and communities of learners has been emphasized in learning and teaching. Those relationships are characterized by trust, respect and equality and are built around a notion of *learning for leading*. As such it is important to ensure that new learning enables all learners to acquire leadership skills which encompass practical understandings of themselves and of relationships. Relationships include those between individuals, engagement of individuals with knowledge, with society, with culture and with the local and global physical and social environment. This involves questioning approaches which make structural organization the centerpiece of educational and other institutions. Structural approaches which are built on external and narrowly defined accountability measures ignore the complexity and richness of human activity and interaction which is central to effective, meaningful and future oriented learning and teaching.

Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi (2000) present Positive Psychology as the scientific study of optimal human functioning, of the factors that allow individuals and communities to thrive. They present the following as the characteristics which relate most clearly to a positive life:

- love and intimacy; meaningful relationships including friendships, loving and being beloved
- satisfying work/occupation, finding a vocation, being committed and valued
- helping others/altruism; helping and being helped/supported
- being a good citizen; doing things which will have public benefit: participating and being respected
- spirituality; connection to a deeper meaning and reality
- leadership
- aesthetic appreciation/pleasures of the mind; sense of the beautiful, enjoyment, appreciation of virtuosity
- knowledge and understanding of areas of life larger than oneself; depth and breadth; having hobbies, knowledge of social world, physical world, human history.

The drawing together of the affective and cognitive in this way is a more effective means of identifying the higher order functioning which more traditional teaching methods and assessment measures have purported to do. The understanding of reciprocal and interactive aspects of learning and teaching can be defined more clearly as abstract or higher order functioning than can definitions that are mainly concrete and administratively tidy. The drawing together of cognition and affect in the content, processes and assessment of new learning is essential in the development of learners and teachers with the capacities for *living, learning and leading*. The importance of educational and related organizations reflecting these approaches in every aspect of their functioning is essential for new learning to emerge.



## School Curriculum

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### *The Compulsory Years*

The focus in the compulsory years of school tends to be on basic skill building in the early years especially in literacy and numeracy as well as in technology. In the middle years the focus moves to social development and more academic skill building directed towards the examination-dominated final years of school. The most clearly articulated of the curriculum changes that are occurring in Australia are those coming out of Queensland, South Australia and Tasmania. While similar directions are clear in the documentation from other states, the scale and detail of change are less clear at this time. What is clear however, in each case, is that new approaches are being framed for pedagogy and authentic assessment. The work of the Australian National Schools Network around digital portfolios, protocols and exhibitions has been influential here. Such approaches are trusting of teachers and students and developed to ensure assessment is integral to the learning and teaching processes, not something that is added on for purposes of accountability and external to the crucial relationship between those two. Further, these approaches to assessment emphasize meaning and purpose in the teaching and learning process for teachers and learners alike.

In Queensland the *New Basics* has refocused attention around learning outcomes with the Rich Tasks requiring students to demonstrate and “display their understandings, knowledges and skills through performance on transdisciplinary activities that have an obvious connection to the wide world”. As such, it has at its core school based pedagogies, which have come to be described as “productive pedagogies”. This focus differs from the Learning to Learn Project in South Australia which draws on a model of Partnerships in Curriculum Leadership, linking together the global education community, state policy developers and curriculum leaders in sites in which the Learning to Learn project is based. In Victoria, the Curriculum and Standards Framework prevails, with its seven key learning areas and a central goal that all students will leave school literate, numerate, socially competent and able to progress to further education or employment. Social competencies are described as multilayered, inter-related and overlapping and as broadly covering perception and interpretation of social cues, recognition and appropriate expression of emotion, communication in a range of social relationships, constructive conflict resolution, self management, responsible decision making skills, flexible coping skills and social problem solving. In Tasmania the current Curriculum Consultation process invites a consideration of the interconnections between the Essential Learnings and the Learning Areas and the relationship of both to what we know as disciplines. Participants in the project will develop shared understandings of these interconnections and contribute to the development of a systemic viewpoint.

The broad span of skills, attitudes, thinking processes, emotional and moral sensitivities implicit in the Essential Learnings, or Essential Framework as they have been titled recently in Tasmania, put pressure on teacher education courses to re-think the concepts of child growth and development embedded in their educational psychology courses to account for current

understanding of brain/mind interrelationships, particularly the relationships between thinking and feeling (Damasio, 1996, 2000). It is now insufficient to think that school learning is fundamentally about cognitive and social development, important as it is to understand their nature and function. Without an understanding of emotional development, moral development and empathic intelligence, the ideals of Essential Learnings/Frameworks and New Basics will be under theorized.

Essential Learnings describe deep understandings that students need to develop now and draw upon in the future as active, responsible citizens and lifelong learners. The development of Essential Learnings is also about enabling students to reflect critically on their own thinking and have a constructive understanding of their learning. The Essential Learnings Framework helps educators of young people from birth to Year 10 to focus, coordinate and integrate the teaching of existing and emerging fields of knowledge in concert with the demands and contexts of the 21st century.

### ***Post-Compulsory Years***

The Victorian Industry Education Partnerships (VIEP) ([www.viep.org.au](http://www.viep.org.au)) focused much of its attention during 2002 on the establishment of the LLENs across Victoria. The establishment of the LLENs and their evaluation is happening in changed political circumstances in many parts of the world. This is made explicit in *A Guide for Local Learning and Employment Networks* (DEET, 2000) where the LLENs are described in terms of new relationships with Government:

*This is consistent with global trends in the relationship between governments, industry and civil society. Increasingly, governments are establishing broad frameworks for the delivery of government-funded programs and services, to be delivered by a range of organizations through diverse approaches, but with greater accountability for outcomes (p.2).*

Within this context, each of the formally incorporated Local Learning and Employment Networks has the potential

- to link education and training more effectively following on from earlier programs, most recently Pathways Programs, Full Service Schools Program and School Focused Youth Services
- to link education, training and industry, following on from work experience, VET in schools and enterprise learning and related programs
- to link education, training, employment and community in engaging young people in positive risk taking through sport and recreation, outdoor activities, arts and community and service learning
- to ask questions about learning and teaching (What does it mean to be literate, numerate, socially competent and able to move to employment/further education and training in 2002?)

- to link professionals in supporting young people through greater interprofessional collaboration, team work, communication across the professions and disciplines, addressing issues of re-professionalization and de-professionalization.

Beyond this, the LLENs have potential to stimulate change in schools, in communities and in individuals with particular attention to the development of lifelong learners who are active, positive and socially responsible citizens. Special attention is essential to ensure prospective teachers have the knowledge and skills to create and improvise within such changed structures.

The *Ministerial Review of Post Compulsory Education and Training Pathways in Victoria* (the Kirby Report) (2000) emphasized the need for shared responsibility for young people, with the responsibility shifting from schools alone to include TAFE, higher education, adult and community education, training providers, community organizations, industry and the broader community. While the perceived linearity of pathways is problematic, so are perceptions that pathways are only about education, training and employment. The meaning and purpose of the education, training and employment pathways constructed for young people need to be open to review by the young people and those with whom they work. Colley (2002) refers to the narrow economic instrumentalist base of many programs for young people which focus essentially on engaging their commitment to employability. Pathways are central to the rhetoric in youth programs in this and other countries, but it is essential that those who work with young people in schools and other locations are sufficiently perceptive and skilful to ensure that holistic approaches and comprehensive support are effectively implemented.

In its report, *Bridging the Gap between the 'Haves' and the 'Have Nots'*, the National Education and Employment Forum (2002) emphasized the need for diverse pathways for young people which combine apprenticeships, accredited vocational education and training, work experience, learning groups, specialist supports in alternative settings and enterprise education. The report draws on the Eldridge Report (2001) which called for a paradigm shift in the content and delivery of education:

*The NEEF Forums endorsed this. The paradigm shift involves an acceptance of a series of transitions in and out of a variety of experiences which may be in and out of school as we now know it, rather than a linear progression through years of schooling and then into work or tertiary education (p.31).*

Young (1998) lists five principles for effective curriculum for 14-19 year olds in Britain. The five principles are:

- The 14-19 curriculum for all students should in part be based on explicit links between school subjects and the changing nature of work
- Economic and technological understanding should be part of the core of the 14-19 curriculum for all students
- School subjects should be presented both as bodies of knowledge to be studied for their own sake and for the concepts they give access to, and as frameworks of understanding which have a history and which can enable students to reflect upon their experiences and their future aspirations for learning and work
- Debates about the changing nature of work should be at the centre of the 14-19 curriculum for all subjects and reflected in appropriate ways in the syllabuses of all subjects
- Work experience should be an integral and connective feature of the 14-19 curriculum of all students.

As Young (1998) sees it, at some point between the ages of 14-19 most young people begin to think about their working future. Economic change, on the global scale we know it, means that personal and social education has to be understood within its framework. As such we are charged with assisting young people to develop the understandings and skills to enable them to actively engage with the world in which they live and to contribute to its development and change.

The role of education and community partnerships, which enhance life choices and give shape and meaning to education, training and employment, cannot be overstated. The meaning of “community” continues to be contested, however, and attempts have been made to define the intersections between individual and community development in the search by *individuals* and by the *community* for *mutual benefit and responsibility*.

The meaning of community in today’s technological age is a long way from the “*small country town, corner shop, everyone knows and cares for everyone picture*” that is often painted for us as the back to the future to which we should aspire. Many young people live their lives in fragments shared with different parents and friends who live far from each other. Chat rooms and SMS messages provide an immediacy and all sorts of possibilities that are far different from the snail mail pen pals of the past. Young people watch the same television programs and movies and listen to the same music as others in many parts of the world: it is a global community. In a single hit on a website, a young person can donate money for young people in third world countries or view the trailer for the next major movie.

## Concluding Thoughts

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At its core new learning emphasizes the need for learners and teachers to engage with the world in which they live, to reflect on it and to develop skills for change and improvement. It emphasizes strongly the function of relationships in learning processes; not only the human relationships so important to effective learning, but the relationships and bonds developed between learners and their embodied experiences of learning. Learners' mind-sets and their affective resonance with learning are part of their relatedness, and that relatedness can shift across time, subject and place. This positions educators as leaders in engaging students with learning and requires such educators to have vision, resilience and enthusiasm for learning. It enables schools to be constructive rehearsal spaces for life.

Effective teacher education programs have as their goal, teachers who

- are knowledgeable about teaching and learning
- are reflective about their work
- are skilled practitioners
- undertake ongoing professional development
- research and improve their work
- are active in the education and induction of prospective members of the profession
- are advocates for teachers, students and for teaching and learning
- have the capacity to interact with other professionals and with the broader community in a meaningful way.

As part of this process it is important that teacher educators in universities, teachers in schools and other community agencies work together in partnership in the development and induction of new members of the teaching profession.

In essence teachers are engaged (sometimes unthinkingly) in the creation of the society in which we live and in the nurturance of its members. This means that teacher education programs must expose prospective teachers to historical, sociological, psychological, and political knowledge that enables them to make judgements and engage actively in the world in which they live with an eye to the 'common good'. It means also that the traditional barriers between teaching and learning need to be blurred in problematising concepts such as 'community', 'citizenship', 'equality', 'knowledge', 'relationships', 'work' and 'humanity'.

Perhaps the way forward is for new learning in teacher education around themes such as:

- exploring the purposes of education
- discovering the excitement of learning
- creating communities of learners
- promoting professional identity
- knowing the disciplines
- practising good pedagogy, and
- designing and reviewing curriculum.

The twenty first century could well be the stage in the history of education characterised as the age of transformation.



## References

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