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A learning community approach to schooling: Two Australian case studies

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A LEARNING COMMUNITY APPROACH TO SCHOOLING

TWO AUSTRALIAN CASE STUDIES

**Anne Klaassen
Diploma of Teaching
Bachelor of Education**

**This thesis is presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Education by coursework and thesis.**

**Faculty of Education
Edith Cowan University**

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EDITH COWAN UNIVERSITY

ABSTRACT

This research project investigates the implementation of a learning community approach in two rural Australian communities with a particular focus on the initiatives of a primary school in each community. Case study research describes and analyses the developments in each community and a cross case analysis examines similarities and differences in approach and outcomes.

A learning community approach to schooling has been initiated by the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and implemented in a range of situations and countries throughout the OECD. The approach has gained value because it supports communities to prepare for the economic and social changes of the emerging knowledge society.

To establish a theoretical framework a review of literature was undertaken, focussing on the OECD learning community models and the key characteristics of the knowledge society. The OECD research identified lifelong learning, objectives and community partnerships as key features of a learning community approach. Further research indicated that a focus on outcomes in health development, social inclusion, civic engagement, economic diversification and environmental sustainability would support communities to prepare for the knowledge society.

The case study research collected data on how each community went about implementing a learning community approach and the extent to which a learning community approach supported primary schools to develop partnerships that met their own and their community's needs. Evidence from each individual case study was examined to determine how a learning community was established and the partnerships established by each primary school. The connection between community issues and knowledge society trends was examined and the success of a learning community approach in supporting the development of partnerships was investigated.

The study concludes with a cross case analysis and a discussion of the key findings of the research. The evidence collected demonstrates that there are several key factors that support the successful implementation of a learning community approach in one or both of the communities. There were strong indicators that it may support a community to address the challenges of an emerging knowledge society if lifelong learning forms the basis for the partnerships established to meet community needs. However, the findings from these two communities suggest that a learning community approach needs to be a community initiative rather than an educational initiative. Further research is needed to establish the applicability of these findings in different circumstances.

DECLARATION

I certify that this thesis does not, to the best of my knowledge and belief:

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

My study examines the implementation of a learning community approach in two rural Australian communities and how the use of this approach supports two primary schools to meet the needs of their communities in an emerging knowledge society environment. Case study research is used to profile the strategies that enabled each community to implement a learning community approach and the community partnerships that a primary school in each community established to meet the needs of their community members.

Traditional approaches to learning promoted schools as single purpose institutions that were designed to cater for the educational needs of students in a specific age range. This view of the role of schools is increasingly being challenged as the negative effects of an emerging knowledge society, such as increased mental health issues and the social isolation of families, force schools to change. For example many schools now organise student breakfasts, parenting classes, after school homework classes and community health support for families. The tension in schools as teachers endeavour to deal with the impact that changing family structures, increased transience and changing values have on student learning and well-being is considerable. These pressures have contributed to a real need for significant educational change to traditional approaches.

The tension in schools is exacerbated by a general lack of understanding amongst teachers regarding the factors stimulating the changes. A lack of understanding has led teachers to apply pressure for quick fix solutions to complex issues that are being driven by the factors affecting society. When evidence suggested that the issues were becoming more prevalent in society and could not be addressed with simple solutions my interest was stimulated in solutions that went outside the traditional approaches to schooling. I wanted to understand how society was changing, what was driving the changes and how we could address the changes in order to better meet the needs of students and parents in school communities. This interest led me to investigate the knowledge society. In my initial readings on the knowledge society a learning

community approach was promoted by many writers as a strategy to address the increasing pressures on schools and the community.

As I continued my work as an educator in rural areas I became more aware of the networks that already existed in local communities and began to consider the links between a learning community approach and what was already happening in some rural communities. It seemed possible that if the strong values about citizenship and civic engagement that traditionally characterise rural communities could be further promoted it would enhance the development of the partnerships of a learning community approach. The impact of the declining rural population on the economic viability of community services also indicated to me that there was a real need for an increased emphasis on partnerships between business, health, education and justice sectors to ensure that services provided to rural communities were maintained. As my experience in rural communities continued I began to believe that the promotion of community partnerships and the increased use of technology would be effective strategies to ensure that services could continue and learning opportunities would be available to meet the changing needs of rural community members. This further stimulated my interest in the implementation of a learning community approach in rural areas.

From my reading on the knowledge society I gained an understanding of how society was changing at a global level. I followed this with an investigation of what was driving these changes and the effects this would have on a community and schooling in that community. Case study research of two rural Australian communities provided me with the opportunity to closely examine the key issues for these communities and what factors were creating the issues. I examined connections between the issues in the case study communities to the factors that researchers suggest are having a global effect on many other communities as we move into 21st century society or a knowledge based economy. In examining two rural Australian communities I was hoping to develop a better understanding of the needs of rural communities and the factors that are impacting on schooling and that this knowledge would improve my ability to lead change in a knowledge society environment.

Using a case study approach to conduct research in communities that were implementing a learning community model provided information regarding the partnerships that the school community had established and enabled judgements to be made on how effective these partnerships were in meeting the needs of their community. The information on the partnerships that each school established with their community was valuable in developing an understanding of the practical application of a learning community approach. From examination of these partnerships it was possible to determine the relevance of a learning community approach to other communities and the benefits of the approach for a rural Australian community.

The next section examines the purpose for the research and defines the focus of the research questions.

1.1 The Research Questions

The research project had two purposes. The first was to investigate the processes and strategies that were used by two communities to establish a learning community approach. This focus was designed to provide knowledge and understanding that could be adapted by readers interested in establishing a learning community approach in another context. The second focus was an investigation of the partnerships two primary schools had established with different sectors of the community. Connections between the identified needs of the school community and factors that research suggested were indicative of an emerging knowledge society were then explored. The effectiveness of using a learning community approach to schooling to support schools in preparing for the emerging knowledge society was the focus for this investigation. Examination of the partnerships established and community participation in the partnerships was the tool used to measure the effectiveness of the approach in supporting schools. The second question was complex and proved far more difficult to collect data on and develop a response.

To achieve the purpose of the research the following questions were explored:

- 1. How is a learning community approach established?*

2. *To what extent does a learning community approach support primary schools to establish partnerships that address the needs of their communities in an emerging knowledge society environment?*

To explore question one the aspects of lifelong learning and objectives were selected for investigation. These two aspects form part of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) definition of a learning community and will be described later in this chapter. The strategies that each community used to develop lifelong learning and the objectives of the community were the focus for question one. The second question collected data on the partnerships established by primary schools and the needs of the community. A literature review identified the outcomes that researchers suggest are necessary for a community that is preparing for the knowledge society. The data collected on partnerships and community needs was then examined for connections to the identified outcomes.

The second question was framed in terms of determining the extent to which a learning community approach had supported schools; however, research suggested that accurate and reliable data collection methods to monitor the success of learning communities are still being developed. As the Learning Towns Project evaluation team indicate, ‘...targeting, evaluation and learner feedback is still in its infancy’ (Sheed & Bottrell, 2001, p.46). The measurement tools used to collect data to respond to question two, partnerships and participation, were based upon those used by Sheed and Bottrell for their evaluation of the Learning Towns Project. Therefore the findings for this question reflect their view on evaluating the success of a learning community approach.

The initial focus for the research questions was how a rural school could implement a learning community approach to schooling. However, the research findings clearly demonstrated that while it is possible to discuss the extent to which a school has aspects of a learning community approach; this extent must be assessed within the context of the community. Therefore, while a school can demonstrate the characteristics of a learning community approach, this cannot be examined in isolation from the community because a key element of a learning community approach is the partnerships established between the five sectors of the community including education.

The next section examines why use of a learning community approach has gained significance as a strategy for schooling in a knowledge society environment.

1.2 The Significance of the Study

The increasing pressures on schools to meet the demands of a knowledge society environment mean that traditional approaches to schooling must be re-evaluated and schools must look for new ways to meet the needs of their students and community. This research examines the impact of an emerging knowledge society on rural communities and the strategies that schools use to meet the needs of their students and the community. The international recognition being given to a learning community approach as a way of addressing knowledge society changes provides relevance for the purpose of this research.

‘We live in a knowledge economy, a knowledge society’ says Hargreaves in his text *Teaching in the Knowledge Society* (Hargreaves, 2001, p.1). It is the pressures for change in this knowledge-based economy and the pressures of a knowledge society environment that are contributing to the complex issues in our schools and communities today. Traditionally, education has been the vehicle or tool used to address societal issues and facilitate change as in the industrial era when schools were organized like factories and students were taught the skills and knowledge that were necessary for industrial work. ‘Educational institutions were a similar environment to the factories that children would grow up to work in. Organized, regimented, time-driven and authoritarian’ (Toffler, 1971, p.362).

However, in the last decade there has been worldwide acknowledgement from researchers, governments and educational leaders of the need for extensive educational reform if we are to meet the demands of the knowledge society. Riel Millar(2003) in his report for the OECD, *Schools for the Future* says, there is much conjecture as to the role of schools in this reform ‘...if the 21st century ushers in fairly radical changes in the socio-economic landscape can schools, indeed, should schools be as central?’ (Millar, 2003, p.2). In order to respond to this question researchers and governments have developed many different models for educational reform and scenarios for future

schooling but the OECD promotion of a 'learning community' is the model that has been implemented at an international level in many OECD countries '...in 1997 the creation of five learning community regional pilot projects in Spain, France, Germany, Denmark-Sweden, and the UK became the test bed for a variety of approaches to lifelong learning-based regional development' (Faris, 2001, p.25). The progress of these five learning community projects has been examined closely by researchers and as a result the OECD learning community model has continued to gain importance as an approach that supports communities to prepare for a knowledge society environment.

In Australia a learning community approach based on the OECD model has been established in several states with independent projects. 'Since 1997 several Australian towns have been working with the learning city idea...and in 1998 the City of Wodonga declared itself Australia's first Learning City' (Henderson, Castles, McGrath & Brown, 2000, p.3). The first significant project was implemented in 2000 through the government funded *Victorian Learning Towns Project* in Victoria and was followed in 2001 by *The National ANTA Learning Community Project* that included towns from several states in Australia. Lynn Kosky, the then Victorian Minister for Education, described a learning community approach as '... a new layer of planning education and training, recognizing that individuals and enterprises are located in communities, and that local responses to change are often the quickest and most effective' (Kosky, 2000, p.3). It is that recognition of organizations and individuals in local communities and the effectiveness of local response to change that gives a learning community approach added credibility as a strategy for renewal in rural Australian communities. The international recognition given to the OECD learning community model and its application to rural communities in Victoria and other states in Australia encouraged me to investigate this approach as a way to prepare Western Australian schools and communities for the knowledge society.

1.3 Thesis Overview

The thesis is structured to commence with a literature review that develops a theoretical framework of a learning community approach based upon the OECD model. The theoretical model then forms the basis for the description of the implementation of

a learning community approach in a case study community and finally is narrowed to investigate a specific school context and the partnerships established by a primary school. The establishment of a theoretical framework first was designed to provide a structure for the research, an understanding of the concepts that are essential to the investigation and an examination of the findings generated by the data collected. The connections between the theoretical framework of the OECD model and the data collected on the community and school were described in order to relate the findings to trends that may be adapted to suit other communities or schools.

The first chapter provides an introduction to the researcher's choice of topic giving an overview of the purpose for the project and including the questions. The relevance of the study is examined and a description of the structure for presenting the thesis and the findings is provided. As the OECD learning community approach forms the basis for the research this is then defined and its relevance as a strategy to support schooling in a knowledge society environment is examined to provide a theoretical framework for understanding the findings of the data collected from the case study communities.

The second chapter is a literature review that explores research evidence to further develop understandings of a learning community approach and describe the aspects of lifelong learning and objectives that are to be investigated. The knowledge society is examined with emerging trends and factors that are creating issues described and the factors that are relevant to this research are identified. The connections between a learning community approach and a knowledge society environment that are relevant to the case study communities of this research are then described.

The third chapter describes the methodology and procedures used to conduct the research. The use of a qualitative case study approach is examined and the step by step processes used to collect and analyse the data including the matrices are described. The trustworthiness and limitations of the research are also explained.

The fourth and fifth chapters provide the research findings from examination of the implementation of a learning community approach in two case study communities.

Each of these chapters begins by describing how the case study community developed strategies to implement the aspects of lifelong learning and community objectives from a learning community approach. The strategies used are identified and presented in a diagram. To answer the second question of the research the findings regarding the key issues affecting the community and partnerships established by the primary school are described. Connections are then sought with the theoretical framework to analyse the findings.

The sixth chapter explores cross case conclusions from the case studies regarding the establishment of a learning community model. The factors determining the success of the aspects of lifelong learning and community objectives in both communities are represented in a causal model. The connections between factors affecting each community and the partnerships developed to address these factors are examined. Cross case conclusions regarding the extent to which a learning community approach has enabled a primary school to develop partnerships to support community needs are described. The chapter concludes with a brief description of features from a learning community approach which could be adapted to another community context.

To understand the tensions in schools referred to earlier, it is important to understand the complexities of the changes currently occurring in society and the impact these changes are having on schooling. The emerging knowledge society is increasingly driving economic and social change and the OECD learning community model provides an approach to these changes. The next section will briefly describe the complexities of the knowledge society and the relevance of a learning community approach to an international and local context.

1.4 Background

The birth of a new century created worldwide discussion that resulted in extensive re-thinking, reorganising and reviewing of future directions at government, corporate and multinational level. As Peter Ellyard said ‘...it is a time to review existing institutions and organisations to see if they need to be reinvented to face the perceived challenges of the new century’ (Ellyard, 1998, p.1). In order to re-think the future it is

essential to understand the factors that will influence society. Peter Kearns identifies some of those factors. 'Australia in the first decade of the 21st century faces the challenge of a new era marked by the radical impact of global forces, rampant technologies, an exponential pace of change, and considerable discontinuity with the overturning of established paradigms – including those for human resource development' (Kearns, 2005, p.iii). As the focus of this research project is education, developing an understanding of how the factors described by Kearns impact on learning is necessary before strategies to promote future directions in education can be discussed.

Evidence suggests the challenges of the 21st century cannot be met by minor adjustments to our current educational practice and there will need to be a significant shift in our thinking and way of doing things. Toffler (1971) warned '...our schools face backwards to a dying system, rather than forwards to the emerging new society' (Toffler, 1971, p.360). Charles Handy (1997) strongly supported significant change in education 'It is a time for bold imaginings, for reinventing what we understand by education' (Handy, 1997, p.228). Australian educator Brian Caldwell (2002) suggested that educational changes are beginning to happen 'Schools are being transformed on a scale that was unimagined a decade or so ago' (Caldwell, 2002, p.2). The Western Australian Department for Education and Training's *Plan for Government Schools 2004-07* also acknowledges the need for schools to make significant adjustments to education 'They [schools] will implement new and innovative approaches to motivating and engaging students in all phases of schooling...' (Department for Education and Training, 2003, p.4). The extensive educational changes promoted are seen by many as an investment in the future of the nation. 'Building policies to encourage and support learning throughout life for all Australians should be seen as a necessary strategic investment in Australia's future...' (Kearns, 2005, p.viii).

The demand for change has stimulated research into educational approaches that are more appropriate for our changing society. Inter-governmental organisations, such as the OECD, the European Parliament, the Nordic Council of Ministers and UNESCO, have conducted extensive international research into societal trends and as a result developed government policy that promotes lifelong learning and a learning community approach. The OECD is an international organisation that brings together leaders and policy makers from member countries to examine changes in the economy and society

and establish common goals and policy. In 1996 the education ministers from OECD countries met ‘...to consider how learning must be adapted to the evolving needs of an increasingly global and information-based economy’ (Chapman, 1997, p151). The OECD Ministerial Report that resulted from this meeting, ‘Lifelong Learning for All’, defined new directions for education policy and promoted common strategies to achieve lifelong learning for all. The United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation(UNESCO) is a specialized agency of the United Nations that has ‘...promoted universal rights in education, learning and citizenship that provide both a legal and normative baseline for all nations’ (Faris, 2001, p.10). UNESCO has also played an important part in promoting the concept of lifelong learning at an international level through the release of the Delors’ 1996 report, ‘Learning: the Treasure Within’. Since the 1992 OECD conference on learning communities in Gothenburg, and the release of the UNESCO and OECD reports in 1996, the OECD has fostered the development of a Learning Cities Network that has resulted in the concept gaining increasing worldwide credibility with over 75 sites listed by 2002.

The interest expressed in the OECD learning community model by many communities throughout Australia and numerous other countries, such as the United Kingdom, Canada, Italy and Finland, suggests that this is a highly credible approach for communities to use to meet the increasing demands for educational reform that are being created by the social and economic needs of the 21st century knowledge society. The length of time (1992-2005) that OECD communities have been trialling the OECD model of a learning community approach has enabled several well-respected evaluations to be conducted including that of Ron Faris who has conducted examinations of learning communities in England and Canada. Faris has developed from his research a comprehensive and diagrammatic explanation of the OECD model of a learning community. ‘The Faris framework is based on over 30 years of research by both UNESCO and the OECD into the application of learning community models’ (Phillips, Wheeler & White, 2005, p.28). The Faris framework has been used in evaluations of Australian learning communities such as the Hume Global Learning Village (Phillips, Wheeler & White, 2005) and the Learning Towns Project (Sheed & Bottrell, 2001). As Faris’ research into learning communities has been extensive and it has been given relevance to an Australian context his description of a learning community model is used in this research.

The 21st century is commonly referred to as the century of the *knowledge society* because knowledge is a key economic element. ‘The basic economic resource...is no longer capital, nor natural resources, nor labour. It is and will be knowledge’ (Drucker, 1993, p.7). In this society Drucker and Ellyard believe there is an economic necessity for an education system that is freely accessible to all members of the community at any stage in their life because workers will demand opportunities to improve their knowledge. ‘Individuals must be able at any stage in their life to continue their formal education and to qualify for knowledge work’ (Drucker, 1993, p.187). Judith Chapman reports that the OECD takes this one step further by indicating that in many countries the provision of on-going educational opportunities is necessary to ensure future economic and social growth. ‘Continued access to education and training for all a country’s citizens are seen as an investment in the future - a pre-condition for economic advance, democracy, social cohesion and personal growth’ (Chapman, 1997, p.151). Kearns sees learning as a need ‘...providing opportunities for learning throughout life for all has become an imperative need – for social, economic, civic and cultural reasons...’ (Kearns, 2005, p. iii). Use of a learning community approach that is based on the OECD model provides opportunities for flexible access to learning that address each of these reasons.

Brian Caldwell and Hedley Beare, Australian education researchers, have examined OECD research into future learning to determine the relevance to Australian communities and have each developed theoretical models for the reform of schooling that are based on the OECD learning community model. The Transformation of Schools blueprint describing ‘community-based learning centres’ (Caldwell, 2002, p.3) aligns closely while Beare (2001) describes a future school, *Education in Neoteric*, that has the strong community relationships suggested by this approach. ‘Because the new model embodies school in community and schooling about community, the learning programmes make use of community facilities’ (Beare, 2001, p.187). Thus Beare’s and Caldwell’s research gives added credibility to the OECD notion of a learning community approach as a way of transforming Australian schools to enable them to achieve outcomes that meet the social and economic needs of communities in a knowledge society environment.

Further credibility and relevance to an Australian context is gained from the Victorian Government's visioning of schools for 2010 where school principals described future schools as 'learning centres' that '...have a core set of buildings but education is carried out throughout the whole community...' (Ellyard, 1998, p.63). The Victorian government has supported the principals' vision by initiating trials of a 'learning community approach' in the Learning Towns Program in regional Victoria. This program is based on the theoretical principles suggested by the OECD and the models being implemented in other OECD countries. The Learning Towns Program is consistent with Beare's and Caldwell's approach to schooling that is more inclusive of the wider community. For these reasons my research uses the OECD model of a learning community as a framework to explore the application of a learning community approach in a Victorian Learning Town and a Western Australian community.

The term a learning community is being used in a range of contexts '...varying models of 'learning communities' are developing around the world...' (Faris, 1998, p.3). As this term is a key concept for this research a clear definition is developed in the next section before the aspects of the approach are discussed in the literature review.

1.5 A Learning Community Approach

To understand a learning community approach the term must first be defined as it has had widespread use in a range of contexts. The Oxford dictionary defines community as 'joint ownership... body of people having religion, profession etc in common...' and learning as 'knowledge got by study' while the OECD defines learning as any '...education, training and identifiable informal learning oriented activity' (OECD, 2001, p.8). Therefore, a learning community is simply a group of people who have a shared ownership of learning opportunities. Faris describes the OECD concept as '...a learning community is a village, town, city or region that is preparing for the rapidly emerging knowledge-society by:

- Using the concept of lifelong learning as an organizing principle and social goal;
- Mobilizing learning resources (knowledge and skills) of all five of its sectors (civic, public, economic, education and voluntary)

- Making practical but imaginative use of learning technologies as a tool to achieve the objectives that are set and owned by the community’ (Faris, 2001, p.4).

This definition specifies the people who have shared ownership of the learning opportunities and describes lifelong learning as the basis of those learning opportunities with technology the tool to achieve objectives that are determined by a knowledge society environment. However, it is not explicit regarding the objectives to be achieved by the community. Faris (2001) expands his definition by describing four inter-related purposes or objectives of a learning community. He says;

‘These purposes, rather than technology, drive the community learning processes that enable achievable, measurable outcomes such as:

- Economic diversification;
- Environmental sustainability;
- Healthy communities; and
- Social inclusion and civic engagement’ (Faris, 2001, p.4).

These outcomes, with the exception of environmental sustainability, have already been described by Chapman (1997) as being a necessary investment for the future of a country. When Faris’ four outcomes are integrated with the OECD definition, a comprehensive explanation of a learning community that clearly outlines the purpose, members, principles, tools and outcomes that are needed to address the changing needs of the knowledge society is developed. The OECD description of a ‘learning city’ ‘...in which communities attempt to learn collectively as a means of changing their own futures’ (OECD, 1993, p.10) and ‘...is socially and economically desirable for adults to continue learning throughout their lives...’ (OECD, 1993, p.11) supports Faris definition. It is this definition that forms the basis for this research.

In this study the OECD definition is used to describe a learning community because it has been the OECD that created the 21st Century concept of a learning community and encouraged implementation of learning communities as a way of addressing knowledge society demands. ‘OECD, UNESCO, the European Parliament, the Nordic Council of Ministers and the Australian Commonwealth Government reveal a commitment to policies of learning across the lifespan and the creation of learning

communities' (Chapman, 1997, p.151). Chapman's comment highlights the increasing commitment of governments in OECD countries to a learning community approach as a way of promoting future learning and supporting communities in an emerging knowledge society. However, Faris' research indicates that while the OECD definition describes a learning community approach, there is not a single prescriptive model for implementation. 'No one model has gained prominence... [rather]...a growing number of communities experiment with different approaches suited to local needs and resources' (Faris, 1998. p.7).

Several examples of an OECD learning community approach are examined in the next section to demonstrate their relevance to the purpose of this research project.

1.6 Examples of a Learning Community Approach

The next examples were chosen to demonstrate the common attributes of the approach, the international breadth of implementation of an OECD learning community model and the application to an Australian context. The uniqueness of each learning community approach is evident and demonstrates that the OECD model can be adjusted to suit the individual needs of a community.

A learning community approach in **Frome**, a market town in England, evolved from the United Kingdom's interest in the OECD model. Community and education leaders in Frome explored ways to improve learning opportunities using a learning community approach to meet the needs of all members of their community. The focus for their learning community was to create partnerships between different sectors of the community to promote lifelong learning opportunities. This involved developing cooperative relationships that linked 17 schools in a non-competitive partnership to provide new learning opportunities for a wider range of community members in a variety of contexts and venues. Community partnerships extended to include the shared use of facilities such as theatres and sporting facilities and a real commitment to promoting school-community projects such as an Arts Festival. A specialist group established a Social Inclusion Partnership that involved schools, police, churches, social services and other community sectors in jointly addressing the social and emotional

issues of youngsters at risk. The goal of leaders in Frome was to seek ‘...ways of developing a learning community and of ensuring that our students are engaged in learning in a community setting’ (Bates & Lloyd, 2002, p.5).

Lifelong learning was a social goal and organising principle within this community and there was a strong focus on partnerships to promote lifelong learning. Lifelong learning as an organising principle is an important aspect of the OECD learning community definition and partnerships that promote lifelong learning should be demonstrated in the learning communities examined in this research.

Edmonton in Canada has established itself as a learning city based on the OECD model of a learning community. The focus for Edmonton was the promotion of lifelong learning to adults and creating a new type of ‘community’ school. The community schools ‘...attempt to involve all citizens in their everyday activities...’ (Hirsch, 1993, p.49). The principles of the community schools are lifelong learning and community partnerships with mentoring and volunteer support two important strategies. While lifelong learning has been used as an organising principle, it has also achieved the social goals of a learning community approach. ‘Citizens appear to feel not just that it is a good idea to learn, but also that learning can often serve a broader community purpose’ (Hirsch, 1993, p.49).

In both examples partnerships to promote lifelong learning are a key feature of the learning community approach. The aim of the partnerships in Frome was to improve social and cultural outcomes, while in Edmonton the focus was on social outcomes with civic engagement promoted through mentoring and volunteer support. These attributes match the learning community purposes described by Faris as supporting a learning community approach through human development and social/cultural development. The partnerships described in each example are to some extent evident in the data collected on the two communities examined by this research and could be transferred to an Australian context to enhance outcomes for a rural community.

The third example, the **Learning Towns Program**, stimulated interest in a learning community approach in Australia that has steadily gained momentum since the

Learning City: From Concept to Reality Conference was held in Albury-Wodonga in 2000 and the Victorian government sponsored nine Victorian communities to become Learning Towns. Similar initiatives have now occurred in Tasmania, New South Wales and South Australia. ‘There is now a growing network of Learning Communities across the world stretching from the United Kingdom and Europe to the USA, Canada and to Australia’ (Henderson, Castles, McGrath & Brown, 2000, p.5). The case study two community examined in this research was involved in the Victorian Learning Towns Program.

The Learning Towns Program described very clear outcomes, procedures, principles and activities to be undertaken to achieve a learning town. ‘The key objective of the Learning Towns Network is the formation of a coalition in each Learning Town which supports, promotes and values lifelong learning’ (Sheed & Bottrell, 2001, p.12). The detailed framework that described how to go about achieving a Learning Town aligns with the OECD description of a learning community model and the framework described by Faris. Each includes lifelong learning as the organising principle with the mobilization of learning resources in all sectors necessary to develop social, cultural, environmental and economic opportunities to address knowledge society outcomes the common goal. The literature review conducted by researchers involved in the Learning Towns Program Evaluation included examination of the OECD model and Faris’ research when identifying some key ideas that provide a conceptualisation of Learning Towns in the Victorian context.

The key ideas are:

- Learning Towns are a local response to global change;
- A Learning Town is a geographic concept, it refers to a named locality;
- Learning Towns acknowledge that learning is an individual and a social activity;
- Learning Towns promote lifelong learning;
- Learning Towns are constituted by partnerships and typify a turning away from old systems of learning;
- Learning Towns operationalise principles of access and equity in provision of education and training; and

- Learning Towns do make a difference (Sheed & Bottrell, 2001, p.29).

The ideas in the Victorian concept of a learning community can be related to those of Kearns, Toffler, Drucker and the OECD with their emphasis being a response to the needs of a knowledge society that is driven by issues such as globalisation, technology, an increased and different demand for knowledge and the need for community and social relationships. These ideas can also be related to current visions for the future of Australian education and training that Caldwell describes in his *Blueprint for Leadership for the Successful Transformation of Schools in the 21st Century* and Beare describes in his *Education in Neoteric*. The necessity for promoting the changes to education and training described by Caldwell and Beare are emphasized by Moira Scollay of the Australian National Training Authority. 'In our rapidly impending knowledge society, it is a choice between becoming lifelong learners and a learning society or missing out on controlling and creating our own future' (Scollay, 2000, p.12). Malcolm Wicks, Minister for Lifelong Learning at the Department for Education and Employment in the United Kingdom, reiterates the importance of lifelong learning '...we have to make the 21st century a learning century for everyone, where the notion of the learning city, the learning community, the learning village, the learning town is embedded into every community' (Setting the Agenda for the Learning Century, 2000, p.2). It is comments such as these that prompted my investigation into the relevance of a learning community approach to rural Australian communities and the exploration of aspects that communities could use to empower them to have some control over creating their own future in a knowledge society environment.

We live in a time of significant and complex change that is having a powerful impact on communities and schools. This chapter has provided some evidence from Australian and international researchers to support and describe the changes that are occurring. The focus for my research has been the impact of these societal changes on schools and an examination of strategies to support schools in managing the changes. While there are many strategies being developed to support schools, and some are discussed in the next section, the evidence from researchers has led me to particularly focus on the use of a learning community approach as a strategy to address societal change for schools and communities. The literature review provides a more detailed

description of research into the specific aspects of the OECD learning community model and the complex changes that the knowledge society is creating.

CHAPTER TWO

Literature Review

Introduction

The purpose of the review is to develop a theoretical framework for understanding and analysing a learning community approach and a knowledge society environment. The framework is derived from literature relating to these concepts and includes associated concepts such as lifelong learning and the factors that are affecting knowledge society communities. Connections between the concepts are established to demonstrate their relevance to this project.

The review begins with an examination of a learning community approach and includes a brief description of several other scenarios for future schooling. The elements that comprise a learning community approach are defined with a view to identifying the aspects upon which data will be collected. The relevance of Faris' learning community conceptual framework to this research is then examined. The learning community outcomes from Faris' conceptual framework are then discussed in the context of an emerging knowledge society and connections established with the second question of the research.

The work of current researchers and futurists such as Faris and Kearns is examined in this review but the writings of Toffler and Drucker, early writers on the knowledge society, are included as many of their findings still underpin recent research. The theoretical framework for a learning community that is constructed is based on the OECD model with evidence from researchers who have investigated the model being considered. As the research has an Australian context, the work of Australian educational researchers, government policy and research on Australian learning communities was examined to provide background to the context. Therefore, while there were many other researchers on this topic those that were considered most relevant related to OECD research or had an Australian content.

2.1 A Learning Community Approach

The idea of a 'learning community' approach to schooling is not new. In fact Damascus around the 10th century was known as a City of Learning. However, society has evolved from an agricultural environment, to an industrial era and now to a capitalist society that has a focus on knowledge. Toffler (1980) described this evolution as three waves of change with 'many countries ... feeling the simultaneous impact of two, even three, quite different waves of change, all moving at different rates of speed and with different degrees of force behind them' (Toffler, 1980, p.14). Jim Watterston (2003) states that a key feature of the third wave or information era is 'Developing skills and attitudes needed to cope with knowledge and service industries and emphasis on sharing and using knowledge' (Watterston, 2003, p.1). The evolution of society has demanded significant changes to traditional educational practices as acknowledged in a report by the Australian National Board of Employment, Education and Training in 1996 'Education and training policy-makers have come to recognise that, because of rapidly changing circumstances...there is a strong need for people to continue their learning...' (National Board of Employment, Education and Training, 1996, p.2). Michael Fullan (1998) acknowledges the rapid changes and suggests that links between schools and the community are necessary to achieve educational change. 'Fundamental change will eventually require radical re-thinking of the relationships between schools and communities' (Fullan, 1998, p.671). The capacity of communities and schools to create learning opportunities to address the changes of the 21st century knowledge society forms the focus for this research.

It was Toffler and Drucker who first predicted that changes to society would force essential changes to 21st century schooling. However, their rationale for the changes was different, with Toffler's focus being social while Drucker's was economic. Toffler's concern for the emotional and mental health of the individual in a knowledge society environment underpins his description of a preferred future for education. 'For education...its prime objective must be to increase the individual's 'cope-ability' (Toffler, 1971, p.364) and '...all students should be grounded in certain common skills needed for human communication and social integration' (Toffler, 1971, p.374). Drucker acknowledged that schooling had a social role in society but largely explored the economics of education with strong connections to business and employment

relationships. 'Education...has to permeate the entire society, with employing organisations of all kinds: businesses, government agencies, non-profits, becoming learning and teaching organisations and with schools increasingly working in partnership with employers and employing organisations' (Drucker, 1993, p180). Although Drucker placed more emphasis on the economic benefits of increasing educational connections to employment rather than the well-being of the individual, as does Toffler, their preferred approach to schooling was similar. Drucker described education as being embedded in the community rather than in special purpose institutions and this is consistent with Toffler's (1980) statement 'More learning will occur outside rather than inside, the classroom' (Toffler, 1980, p.384). Despite their differing perspectives, they shared a common belief that lifelong learning and using the resources of all five sectors of the community are necessary to successfully meet the educational needs of members of the knowledge society. This view is supported by Australian researchers Liz Henderson, Rachel Castles, Majella McGrath and Tony Brown in a booklet produced for the first Learning City Conference in 2000 'A Learning Community encourages, recognises and celebrates lifelong learning for all, working toward stimulating economic regeneration and social cohesion for the whole community' (Henderson, Castles, McGrath & Brown, 2000, p.4).

For Toffler (1980), the way to address the knowledge society demand for lifelong learning was to use community resources to enable students of all ages to learn at home, at school or in the community and be taught by parents, teachers or community members who have the skills. His approach contained two key elements of the OECD learning community model: lifelong learning and agreed objectives. He believed lifelong learning could be achieved through the use of community learning resources and that clear objectives are a necessary organisational tool to achieve the goals of a learning community. Drucker (1993), too, emphasised the societal need for lifelong learning. However, his vision was described in terms of access to learning that will enhance the individual's capacity for knowledge work. He suggested that learning opportunities will be delivered flexibly to students of all ages in a range of situations. Drucker also flagged the necessity for schools to have close partnerships with other organisations in order to share resources and facilities. To achieve these partnerships with other organisations in different sectors, common goals and guidelines for the use of resources will need to be established. Therefore his vision for future education also

contained the key elements of lifelong learning and community objectives that form the basis for the OECD learning community model.

Ellyard, Caldwell and Beare each describe a preferred approach to schooling that envisions the school as an integral part of the whole community ‘...a core set of buildings but learning is carried out throughout the whole community...’ (Ellyard, 1998, p.76) ‘...community based learning centre...’ (Caldwell, 2002, p.3) or ‘...schooling conducted in the community...’ (Beare, 2001, p.187). For each of these researchers a learning community approach promotes a true partnership between school and the community where shared objectives and resources unite a community in pursuing the common goal of life-long learning. Ellyard and Caldwell, however, retain a central specific purpose organisation as the core of their learning community vision while Beare takes this position at one point but also promotes the complete integration of schools into community organisations such as shops and homes. This research investigates the extent to which a community, and a school community, develop partnerships to promote lifelong learning in order to support members in meeting the outcomes of an emerging knowledge society.

In 2001, as part of the OECD/CERI program of *Schooling for Tomorrow*, six scenarios to describe future schooling were constructed. ‘[S]cenarios underline that there is not one pathway into the future but many...’ (OECD, 2001, p.121). These scenarios were not intended to be exhaustive rather to enhance understanding of how schooling might develop and promote the long-term processes of change. The scenarios were clustered into three main categories called: Attempting to maintain the status quo, Re-schooling and De-schooling. The two scenarios that fall into the ‘status quo’ category build on existing features of education with the continuation of ‘bureaucratic institutionalised systems’. The first describes a gradual continuation of the present with school systems maintaining a strong position while the second scenario predicts a major crisis in school systems triggered by a mass exodus of teachers. The two re-schooling scenarios describe schools with ‘...more powerful social links and community leadership...’ and ‘...flexible ‘learning organisations’ with a strong knowledge focus...’ The final two scenarios involve ‘de-schooling’ or the dismantling of school institutions through the establishment of ICT networks and the extension of ‘market model’ systems (OECD, 2001, p.121).

While all six scenarios are acknowledged as being possible descriptors of future schooling the most relevant to my line of inquiry was scenario 3, the re-schooling strategy that described schools as social centres with strong community links. It was felt that the ‘status quo’ scenarios and the ‘de-schooling scenarios’ did not promote the community partnerships that were evident in the rural communities under investigation.

Scenario 4, the re-schooling scenario that promotes ‘learning organisations’ with a strong knowledge focus was closely examined but research conducted by Andy Hargreaves at Blue Mountain secondary school in Ontario revealed some significant differences to scenario 3. Hargreaves emphasizes three key components of the learning organisation at Blue Mountain school ‘collaborative work... consistent focus on teaching and learning... and gathering assessment data to inquire into and evaluate progress...’ (Hargreaves, 2003, p.128). The professional skill and capacity of community members is built in order to create sustainable school improvements in this scenario. Lifelong learning is promoted, as are close links between schools, business and other organisations, but the key element is to build knowledge ‘...schools are revitalised around a strong ‘knowledge’ agenda...’ (OECD, 2001, p.130). Hargreaves’ definition of a ‘learning organization and learning community’ (Hargreaves, 2003, p.127) is based upon his research at Blue Mountain school and refers to an educational organization that works for the purpose of improvement. He describes a school environment that focuses on learning, pursues improvement, is professional and is caring but retains the traditional context for schools. His model, based on scenario 4, does not promote schools establishing connections with all sectors of the community including civic, public, economic and voluntary sectors. Therefore, although Hargreaves discusses a learning community as an approach to teaching in the knowledge society, his understanding of a learning community fits more closely with the OECD’s re-schooling scenario 4 where professional learning communities are established. This perspective contains certain elements of the OECD definition but focuses principally on knowledge rather than the social outcomes associated with lifelong learning and the partnerships between different community sectors that exist in the OECD description.

Re-schooling scenario 3 includes a more explicit focus on lifelong learning and promotes the achievement of social and cultural outcomes and citizenship through

closer relationships between schools and local communities. ‘This scenario fits a long standing tradition advocating that closer links be forged between schools and local communities’ (OECD, 2001, p.129). In scenario 3, the description of a ‘school as a core social centre’ promotes the need for schools to become the centre of the community and be responsible for providing an ‘effective bulwark against social fragmentation and a crisis of values’ (OECD, 2001, p.127) and greater social equity. Secondly, more explicit sharing with the community of roles, resources and responsibilities to enhance social and cultural outcomes is described. Lifelong learning with learning available to persons of all ages is the third element. Finally, new forms of governance fostering public agreement on goals are advocated.

The key elements of the OECD learning community model, lifelong learning and agreed objectives, are clearly contained in the re-schooling scenario 3 and promote methods of dealing with the social isolation that Toffler suggests will be inherent in the knowledge society. I believe, however, that the increased and diverse demands for knowledge that Drucker (1993) sees as an economic feature of the knowledge society can also be satisfied through this approach. This view is supported by the Victorian Government that has developed the Learning Towns project to ‘...use learning as a way of promoting social cohesion and economic development involving all parts of the community’ (Adult Community and Further Education Board, 2000, p.4). It is the scenario 3 learning community approach that is currently most relevant to the rural communities investigated in this research. However, recent OECD research into the relationships between lifelong learning and schools suggests that ‘...lifelong learning would be best served by a judicious combination of scenarios...’(OECD, 2003, p.8). Therefore re-schooling, as described in scenario 3, may be best for younger students as it has a strong focus on knowledge and social constructs, while de-schooling may be more appropriate for adolescent students as it promotes community networks, distance education and a close relationship with markets.

There are many interpretations of who are members of a community but the OECD definition explicitly defines the members of a learning community.

2.2 Members of a Learning Community

The OECD definition describes a learning community as being comprised of all the members who inhabit a geographical location such as a village, town, city or region. Within that geographical area I have defined the community as all members of the five sectors described by the OECD: education, economic, civic, public and voluntary. The unique environment of a school community is the education subset of the OECD community sectors that contains the administrative leaders, teachers, support staff, parents, volunteers and students who are members of an educational organisation (see: Figure 1). An important aspect to be investigated in this project is the extent to which a school community develops partnerships with the civic, voluntary, public, economic and education sectors that exist within a town, city or region. The extent to which the partnerships meet the needs of their town or region and achieve objectives that promote the knowledge society outcomes described by Faris are explored.

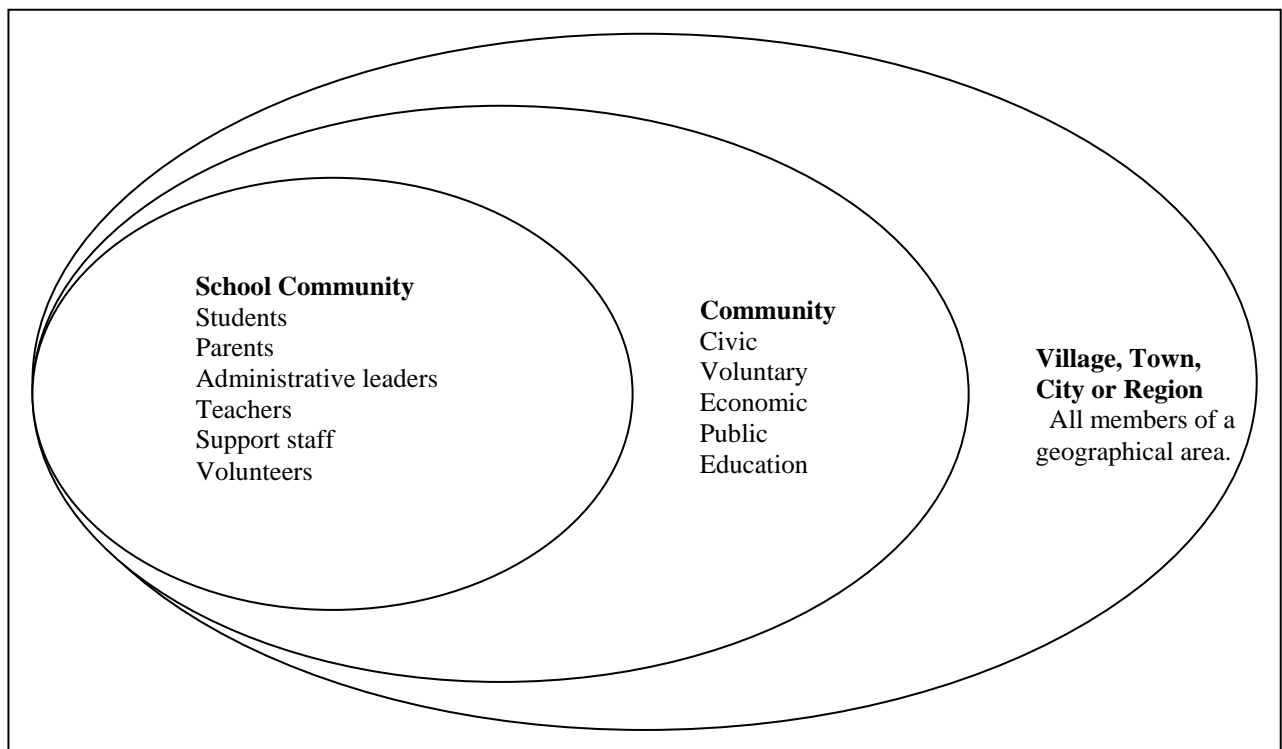


Figure 1: Members of a learning community

2.3 Key Aspects of a Learning Community Approach

The OECD learning community definition describes the use of lifelong learning as an organising principle or social goal. As this principle forms the basis for the definition and the learning community examples in Chapter One, it is explored as a key aspect of a learning community approach in the two communities investigated. The second key aspect explored is the objectives that each community set in order to prepare for the emerging knowledge society. Objectives and the establishment of common goals that have been agreed to by the community are an important aspect of developing a cohesive community approach to change. The mobilization of learning resources in the five community sectors mentioned in the OECD definition will be investigated through examination of the partnerships that are established with the education sector to achieve lifelong learning or community objectives. Technology is viewed as a strategy or tool that the community can use to support lifelong learning and the objectives. The outcomes defined by Faris' definition form the basis for the objectives of the learning community in a knowledge society.

The key aspects of lifelong learning and objectives will be explored further in the next section.

2.3.1 Lifelong learning

The first aspect of the OECD definition of a learning community, lifelong learning, is a term that has become a 'buzz' word in education. The OECD defines it as '...an ideal whereby conscious learning continues as a matter of course throughout people's lives, rather than being seen as 'complete' when initial full-time education comes to an end' (OECD, 2001, p.8). Other researchers define lifelong learning as a seamless post-compulsory education and training system that concentrates on '...how to integrate the three overlapping sites of lifelong learning - learning in and for the workplace; learning in and through formal and informal education and training; and community based learning' (Brown, 2000, p.7) while others simplistically say that it is a cradle to grave concept (Longworth, 1999). The OECD definition clearly fits with a learning community approach as it regards learning as an on-going activity that continues from birth to death as Longworth suggests. Brown's definition provides the specific contexts for the 'conscious learning' described by the OECD and these could be

applied from birth to death as suggested by Longworth. The three overlapping sites of lifelong learning defined by Brown provide a context for the four pillars of lifelong learning described by Delors.

The four pillars of lifelong learning (Delors, 1996, p.21) are:

- Learning to know - mastery of learning tools rather than acquiring knowledge and developing skill in concentration, memory and the ability to think.
- Learning to do - innovation and the ability to adapt.
- Learning to live together - abilities to avoid conflict or peacefully resolve issues, understandings of other cultures and the ability to work cooperatively.
- Learning to be - education that contributes to a person's complete development: mind and body, intelligence, sensitivity, aesthetic appreciation and spirituality.

Delors' definition extends our traditional view of learning from a purely academic focus on the learning of facts and skills to include the social aspects of learning that enable us to live together and understand ourselves and others. These aspects directly relate to the outcomes for a knowledge society community that are promoted by Faris as healthy communities, social inclusiveness and civic understanding while the aspects of learning to know and do are necessary to achieve Faris' outcomes of economic diversification and environmental sustainability. Brown's broadening of learning sites from educational organisations to include the workplace and the community provides further support for a learning community approach to learning.

2.3.2 Objectives of the OECD learning community approach

The second aspect of a learning community to be investigated is the development of agreed objectives. In the OECD learning community model these objectives should be agreed to by community members and guide the partnerships between sectors necessary to promote lifelong learning. Faris, in the learning community conceptual framework that he adapted from the OECD approach, proposes four community purposes that could describe these objectives (Faris, 2001, p.5). These purposes are: human and social/cultural development, environmental stewardship and community economic development.

2.4 A Learning Community Conceptual Framework

Faris' conceptual framework (see Figure 2) describes the connections between the principle of lifelong learning and the mobilization of learning resources in order to achieve objectives that will prepare a community for a knowledge society environment. 'This model moves from the general guiding principles of lifelong learning, and the use of intangible assets of social/human capital, to the particular purposes and outcomes that a community intends' (Faris, 2001, p. 4). The framework also defines criteria that may be used to judge the success of a community in achieving the proposed outcomes and has been specifically designed for learning communities. 'The Faris framework is based on over 30 years of research by both UNESCO and the OECD into the application of learning community models' (Phillips, Wheeler & White, 2005.p.28).

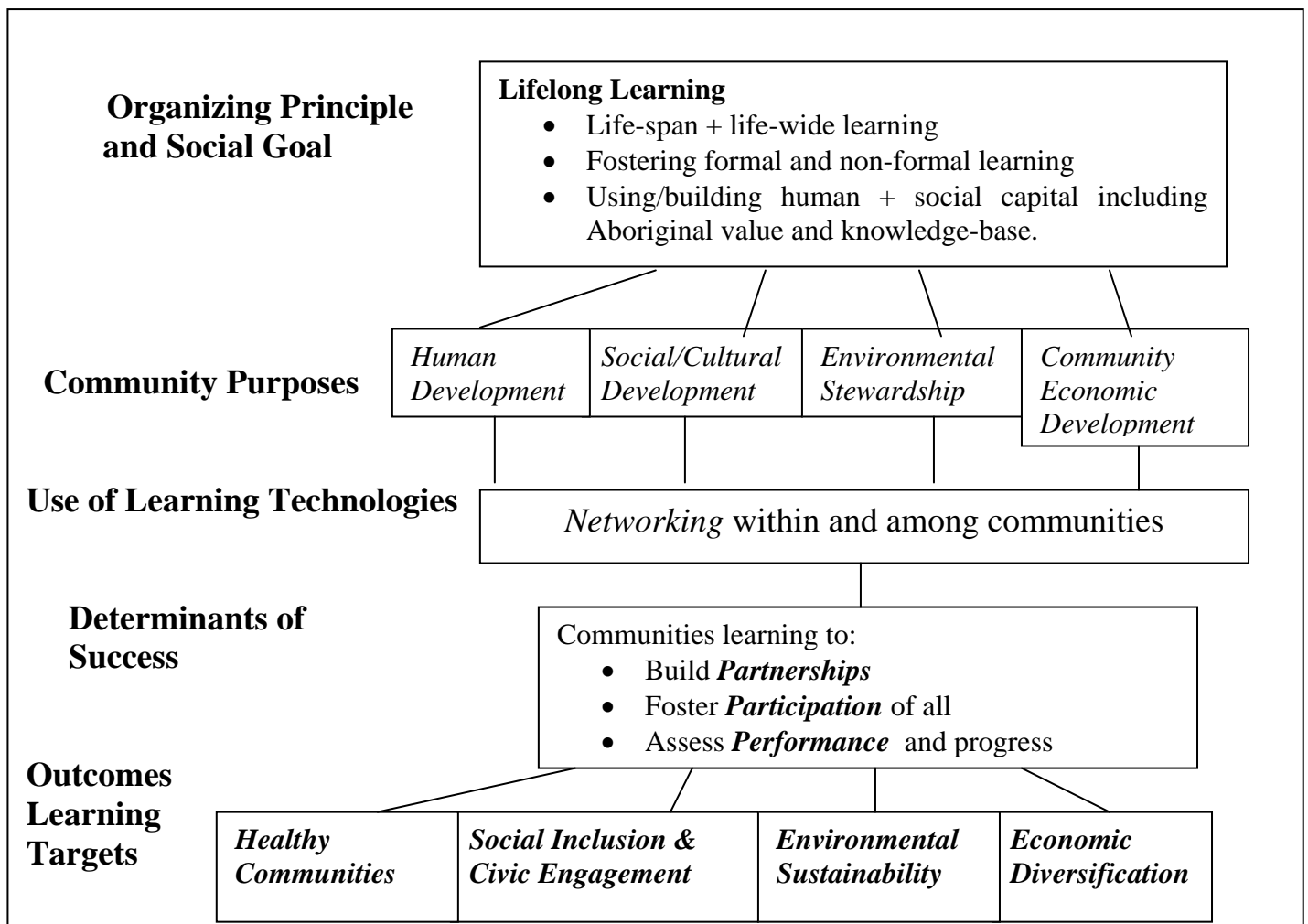


Figure 2: Faris' learning community conceptual framework

(Faris, 2001, p.5)

While the organizing principle for Faris' description of the OECD model is lifelong learning, the social goal includes building human and social capital. Human capital is described by Faris as a focus on the individual, with inputs measured by educational qualifications and length of training while outputs are measured in terms of individual income or productivity levels. Social capital focuses on relationships and networks with inputs measured by the strength of mutual obligation and civic engagement and outputs measured in terms of quality of life. Faris' focus on goals that build human and social capital in a learning community reiterates Toffler, Drucker and the OECD's emphasis on developing a community that actively promotes the acquisition of learning as a social activity in every sector. '...learning is essentially a social and community process - most of what we learn is with and from others' (Faris, 2001, p.4). Chapman's view of the OECD model of learning also places a strong emphasis on promoting human and social capital '...social goals that were...equally important: social inclusiveness, democratic participation, and individual growth and fulfilment for all citizens' (Chapman, 1997, p.152). John West-Burnham supports an emphasis on social capital and links it to economic success '...social capital of the right sort boosts economic efficiency...' (West-Burnham, 2002, p.8).

The community purposes in Faris' framework provide the goals or objectives that the OECD model describes as necessary to achieve the economic and social outcomes that are demanded by an emerging knowledge society. Technology is seen as a tool to enable the networking of community learning processes to achieve the outcomes. Goals or objectives can be readily formulated to address the community purposes of human, social/cultural and economic development and environmental stewardship. Agreed community objectives with these purposes will aim to achieve the social outcomes of healthy communities, social inclusion and civic engagement and the economic outcomes of economic diversification and environmental sustainability. Faris' conceptual framework uses the OECD learning community approach to provide a pathway that connects the agreed objectives or purposes of a community to specific outcomes that are desirable in emerging knowledge society. These connections form the basis for describing findings in this research project.

To understand how a learning community approach can promote lifelong learning and meet the demands for economic and social change that are being created by

an emerging knowledge society it is essential to briefly explore the origins and features of the knowledge society.

2.5 The Knowledge Society

During the last decade our global environment has increasingly been labelled a *knowledge society*. Hargreaves says he uses the term in his text *Teaching in the Knowledge Society* 'because of its widespread and accepted use' (Hargreaves, 2003, p.3). However, Drucker first began to use the terms 'knowledge work' and 'knowledge workers' after Fritz Machlup, a Princeton economist, coined the phrase 'knowledge industries' in his book *Production of Knowledge in the US* in 1962. Drucker promoted the idea that the key resource of our changing society was knowledge not capital, land or labour and hence an increasing amount of work would be 'knowledge work' that required 'knowledge workers' (Drucker, 1993, p.5) as in Singapore where it is seen as the basis for the economy. Toffler (1980) in *The Third Wave* also described a society that focused on developing the skills and attitudes needed to cope with knowledge and service industries and an emphasis on sharing using knowledge. It is the changing emphasis in society on 'knowledge work' that has given our current society the descriptor of 'knowledge society'. Hargreaves says '...a knowledge society is really a learning society' (Hargreaves, 2003, p.3) with a focus on work and workers who '...process information and knowledge in ways that maximize learning, stimulate ingenuity and invention, and develop the capacity to initiate and cope with change' (Hargreaves, 2003, p.3).

Drucker's definition of knowledge is 'The systematic and purposeful acquisition of information and its systematic application' (Drucker, 1969, p.32). Learning, however, is the process for acquiring and applying information systematically and purposefully and this fits with Hargreaves' definition of the knowledge society as a learning society. In our society knowledge now extends far beyond the retention of facts. Knowledge applies, as Drucker says, not only to learning new skills, understandings or information but learning how to apply these in a range of contexts. Our understanding of the scope of knowledge has also changed to include all the aspects of learning described in Delors' (1996) four pillars of lifelong learning so that knowledge is now seen as both a personal resource and an economic resource. As Drucker (1993) asserted, 'Knowledge

is the only meaningful resource today' (Drucker, 1993, p.38). In Singapore, the government acknowledges the importance of knowledge as a resource '...we will be able to tap the well of knowledge to add value to Singapore, and transit it into a strong knowledge economy of the new millennium' (Singapore Government Policy, 2000, p.37).

The Oxford dictionary definition of a society is 'the customs and organization of a civilized nation... social mode of life... association of persons united by a common aim or interest or principle'. Applying this definition to a knowledge society means we are describing a group of people whose customs and social mode of life are being shaped by the common aim of acquiring and using knowledge. As Drucker (1993) says, 'The shift from knowledge to knowledges has given knowledge the power to create a new society' (Drucker, 1993, p.42). This new society is, as Hargreaves (2001) says, commonly referred to as the *knowledge society*.

When examining the terms 'community' and 'society', some strong connections emerge. The Oxford dictionary suggests a community is 'a body of people having religion, profession etc in common' and a society is an 'association of persons united by a common aim or interest or principle'. Therefore the key elements of a community or a society are a group of people with a common aim or interest. 'Community and society are ...defined by a bond that holds together human beings, whether language, culture, history or locality' (Drucker, 1993, p.43). In the context of my research, that common bond is learning or the acquisition and application of knowledge while the community refers specifically to a group of members who exist as a microcosm within a wider society called the knowledge society. In Chapter Four and Five, data from two communities that have used a community model of education as a means of addressing the increasing interest in learning that is characteristic of the knowledge society will be explored.

2.5.1 An Emerging Knowledge Society

Toffler (1980) in *The Third Wave* uses a societal wave concept to provide a comprehensive historical picture of how society has evolved and an understanding of

this is useful when investigating 21st century society and schooling. Society in Toffler's First Wave was characterised by a rural economy composed of small family groups who passed on skills and values to their children with schooling largely elitist and focused on intellectual pursuits. The Second Wave was industrial with compulsory schooling being conducted in large-scale, purpose built organisations that looked like factories. Children were divided into age-related year groups and knowledge was divided into subjects that fitted a curriculum that students moved through in a strictly controlled, linear fashion. In these schools the skills of industry: punctuality, obedience and repetitive work were highly valued. In the information era, or Third Wave, Toffler predicted the physical environment of school would change so that students learn at home and in the community. Learning would become a lifelong exercise that is available to all members of the community at any age thus can be 'interspersed' with part time work and community interaction to make skills and knowledge learnt at school more authentic. 'Throughout these eras the education system tended to mirror the economic system of the day' (Faris, 2001, p.8). One aspect of this project is to explore how the community based approach to learning promoted by Toffler in *The Third Wave* and investigated by Faris in OECD countries can be used to establish the strong community partnerships of the pre-industrial era and promote the lifelong learning of the information era.

2.5.2 Drivers of change

The 'three inter-related drivers' of the emerging knowledge society according to Faris are: 'globalization; increased use of information and communication technologies; and an explosion of new knowledge and learning, especially in the sciences and technologies' (Faris, 2001, p.9). Kearns describes the drivers of change in Australia as '...globalisation, the knowledge economy, demography, technology, changes in work and labour markets, and sustaining communities' (Kearns, 2005, p.iv). For the purpose of this research the key drivers of change considered are globalization, technology and new knowledge and learning although evidence from the communities studied suggests that changes in work and labour markets brought about by the knowledge economy and changing demographics have caused the communities to develop strategies to ensure sustainability.

Ellyard says, 'The world we live in is becoming far more unified – globalised - in the way our lives are conducted and determined' (Ellyard, 1998, p.1). Improvements in transport and technology and the interconnectedness and fragility of our world environment are contributing to the breaking down of barriers between countries so that every nation must take into consideration every other nation. Futurists and researchers such as Kearns and Ellyard acknowledge globalisation as a major social, economic, political and environmental influence on the knowledge society. '...globalisation provokes the most anxiety and has attracted the greatest amount of attention by researchers' (Ellyard, 1998, p.3). This attention is due to the fact that globalisation will affect nearly every facet of the lives of community members in a positive or negative way. Rapidly improving information and communication technologies are a key factor in promoting the influence of globalisation on communities in the knowledge society.

The rapid pace of change of technology means that any research regarding the influence of technology is quickly dated. '...technology is not destiny... [but] ...there is a range of new technologies that could become pervasive' (Miller, 2003, p.6). However, technology has significantly influenced industry with the rate of change and innovation rapidly increasing. Ellyard says 'Technological innovation... is too important not to be promoted... [but] ...the development of these technologies is already testing beliefs and challenging moral and ethical values' (Ellyard, 1998, p.88). Technology also is driving changes to the skills and knowledge necessary for employment in a knowledge society. '...technological developments demand a continuous renewal and updating of skills' (Johnston, 2000, p.21). Technology is an essential driver of change in the knowledge society with the OECD and Faris viewing technology as the tool to achieve global learning networks that enable open access to data and stronger communication links between all stakeholders. It is this view of technology as a tool that supports learning networks within and among communities as described by Faris in his conceptual framework that will form the basis for this research.

Toffler and Drucker share similar understandings of what knowledge in 21st century society will look like and describe lifelong learning as a key element. While Toffler doesn't actually use the term 'life-long learning' it is clearly what he means when he says '...life-long education on a plug-in/plug-out basis' (Toffler, 1970, p.368) and Drucker says 'Post-capitalist society requires life-long learning' (Drucker, 1993,

p.183). More recent researchers, Ellyard, Beare and the OECD, support the notion that lifelong learning is a key feature of the knowledge society and John Dawkins (2002) includes an escalating demand for lifelong learning as one of the four trend breakers that he describes as characteristics of the education revolution.

Toffler and Drucker were the first to suggest that our concept of knowledge will also change to include the processes of learning to learn, learning to change and learning to relate. These concepts relate closely to the four pillars of lifelong learning defined by Delors. Ellyard, too, recognises that our understanding of learning will change and defined eight types of learning that he believes will be important in the knowledge society. (Ellyard, 2001, p.78). This research, however, will use the pillars of lifelong learning described by Delors as they form the basis for Hargreaves, Beare, Caldwell, Faris and the OECD understanding of knowledge in the knowledge society. ‘Two are the prime pillars of the knowledge economy: learning to know, and learning to do...The other two pillars are just as important...’ (Hargreaves, 2003, p.36). The pillars of learning to live together and learning to be provide the basis for establishing the social and emotional relationships that characterise a learning community and could address the negative effects that the knowledge society may have on individuals. These two aspects also form the basis for building the human and social capital described by Faris as a key social goal of a learning community.

2.5.3 Knowledge society outcomes

The second focus of my research is to explore the extent to which a learning community model enables a primary school to develop partnerships that address the factors of the information age that are impacting on their community and work towards achieving the outcomes that Faris suggests should be the targets of a knowledge society community. To answer this question it is necessary to further define the factors affecting members of the emerging knowledge society. The next section, therefore, will explore the key elements of the knowledge society and their influence on members of a learning community. The literature reviewed was examined to identify the issues that will affect learning community members thus elements of political import were not pursued unless they related directly to learning. Ellyard, for example, considers tribalisation to be a key feature of the knowledge society but as this is largely a cultural and political issue rather than educational one, it was not included.

The knowledge society issues that are explored will be grouped according to the outcomes that Faris believes a learning community needs to achieve (see Figure 2). They are healthy communities, social inclusion and civic engagement, environmental sustainability and economic diversification. Review of Toffler, Drucker, Ellyard, the OECD and Faris' work indicated that addressing these issues in order to achieve Faris' outcomes is critical for a community in the emerging knowledge society. The connections between these outcomes will be explored further in the following review.

2.5.4 Healthy communities

The drivers of change in the knowledge society, particularly globalisation and technology, will combine to challenge traditional values and create social issues for members of this society. Toffler was the first predictor of this social impact in *Future Shock* 'This is a book about what happens to people when they are overwhelmed by change' (Toffler, 1971, p.11). Toffler believed that the rapid rate of lifestyle change in the knowledge society would create difficulties for its members. An increasingly transient population and increasing choice would lead to difficulties in social relationships that would cause mental and emotional stress for community members. This notion is supported by the findings of the National Survey of Mental Health and Well-Being (2001) '...almost one in five Australians aged 18 or over had experienced a mental disorder at some time during the last twelve months...' (Talemaitoga, 2001, p.3). The OECD strongly supports Toffler's concern for the well-being of the individual by clearly signalling that social fragmentation and a crisis in values is a key feature of current society and education must have a greater role in social responsibility. '...the fragmentation occurring in many family and community settings [is] raising new concerns about the socialisation of children' (OECD, 2001, p.129).

In *The Third Wave*, Toffler predicted that many factors in 21st century society would cause an increase in anti-social behaviour with one in four people suffering emotional or mental stress. '[O]ne in four citizens in the US suffers from some form of severe emotional or mental stress' (Toffler, 1980, p.369). Current trends support Toffler's predictions as governments of today acknowledge pressures on health services that include increasing demands for mental health services. As Dr Michael Sawyer,

Professor of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry at the University of Adelaide says, ‘...increasing rates of adolescent mental health problems has the potential to adversely affect Australia’s growth and development’(Sawyer, 2005, p.33). Therefore any future approach to learning should incorporate the three requirements that Toffler suggests individuals need to lead a life that is mentally and emotionally fulfilling.

These are:

- Community - to offset loneliness;
- Structure - a life without clear demands on time is aimless;
- Meaning - to feel that our lives count;
 - to have relationships with society;
 - to see ourselves as part of the larger scheme of things

(Toffler, 1980, p.369).

More recent research supports Toffler’s focus on community as a way to establish the relationships that will give our lives meaning and prevent loneliness. ‘The term ‘community’ has become a cliché in today’s cities for a simple reason: it is something that urban dwellers feel they have lost, and would like to recreate’ (OECD, 2001, p.22). A participant in the Hawthorn Community Education Project in Victoria (2001) said ‘We are the community. The more people get involved – in anything – then the better the health of the community in general’ (Adult Community Education, 2001, p.56). Each of these statements support Toffler’s view from the early 1990’s.

Beare and Drucker briefly mention that schools will need to have a role in maintaining a commitment to values and the social and personal development of individuals. Ellyard in his ideas about planetism agrees with Toffler and the OECD that there will be increased stress on individuals’ health and well-being and includes a chapter that specifically deals with establishing social and cultural sustainability in the new millennium. This sustainability is a necessity because, as Hargreaves says, ‘ ... members of the knowledge society will put self interest before the social good, consumption before community, temporary teamwork before long term emotions, exhibit intolerance of race and gender differences and inequity in wealth...’ (Hargreaves, 2003, p.3).

Recent researchers such as Hargreaves (2003) support Toffler's initial research in *Future Shock* indicating that while there will be positive results from drivers of change such as technology and globalisation, there will also be negative effects on the population. '[T]he new knowledge society brings with it great risks and adverse side effects' (Hargreaves, 2003, p.49). Researchers provide clear evidence that social issues will be a significant influence on the health and well-being of members of the knowledge society and education will have a vital role in addressing these issues through the implementation of lifelong learning strategies. 'Social imperatives flowing from these drivers were raised... There was substantial agreement that the impact of these drivers makes lifelong learning for all an imperative requirement and challenge for Australian society' (Kearns, 2005, p.iv).

2.5.5 Social Inclusion and Civic Engagement

There is growing evidence from researchers and governments that the rapidly changing knowledge society has the ability to widen the gap between the rich and poor and that this is an element that needs to be addressed. '...the rise in unemployment in many OECD countries since the mid-1970s and widening income gaps in others are a product of this knowledge and skill gap' (Johnston, 2000, p.21). Changes to traditional families and employment opportunities have resulted in an increase in single parent families, long term unemployment or welfare families and marginalisation of indigenous families. '... a new social category has emerged... a class of people who are... separated not only from the more affluent in our community but also from the traditional working classes and others on low income' (Chapman, 1997, p.161). It is this group of the population that have become increasingly isolated from society with mental and emotional health problems that are fuelled by substance abuse issues. Barry Jones believes the isolation will foster tension. 'There will be mounting tension between the information-rich, who are employed and affluent, and the information-poor, who are unskilled, bored, frustrated and unhappy about subsisting on a guaranteed income' (Jones, 1982, p.7). Faris says 'In societies that have sharp social and economic differences among individuals in the population, the overall health and well-being is lower than in societies where the differences are less pronounced' (Faris, 2001, p.13). Therefore, a key purpose of a knowledge society community should be social and

human development that provides opportunities to foster learning through relationships and networking to reduce isolation and encourage social inclusion and equity.

Civic engagement is the development of communitarian values that promote the ability to accept responsibility for a role in the community. '[T]o strengthen democratic values, to cultivate community life...' (Faris, 2001, p.3). It relies on community members caring about their community and being prepared to take action to identify and promote learning opportunities that meet the needs of their community. As described in the Edmonton learning community model, civic engagement encourages community members to volunteer to work in a variety of unpaid roles to actively support learning in their community. 'The degree to which a community fosters civic engagement, productive work teams, supportive families and social organisations affects the propensity of learners in formal settings to learn with and from others' (Faris, 2001, p.14). A report published by the Wesley Mission in Australia describes volunteering or civic engagement as a strategy that is essential for the future health of communities and the promotion of social capital. 'The future health of our communities depends on the involvement of our citizens and in a community faced with increasing social problems, the volunteer has become one of the chief sources of human contact' (Wesley Mission, 2005, p.29).

2.5.6 Economic Diversification

The knowledge society is based on the economic productivity of knowledge so that knowledge work and knowledge workers form the basis for society. This society will require continuous learning for all with a system that effectively links schools with the less formal settings of the family, community and workplace. Therefore, knowledge must be linked to business organisations and become an economic commodity that all researchers suggest will no longer be the sole business of schools. '[I]ncreasingly schools and employing institutions will have to work together in the advanced education of adults as well' (Drucker, 1993, p.188). The Australian Labor Party in its 2003 Knowledge Nation Taskforce Report supports this view: 'A Knowledge Nation is about raising the standard at every level, and providing linkages with all aspects of Australian life' (Australian Labor Party, 2003, p.7). Drucker says there will be a new economic

competitiveness in the knowledge society that will see the establishment of closer connections between schools and businesses and Beare suggests schools themselves will become businesses that are marketing the product of learning. The knowledge society will result in an increased demand for learning that Ellyard believes will create a shortage of resources for providing education and this will foster the business and community links necessary to meet the demand. ‘...industry is a key stakeholder and beneficiary in building a learning culture in Australia, and should be an active partner’ (Kearns, 2005, p.vi).

To maintain economic productivity in a knowledge based environment, education will need to teach innovation, creativity, technology and the application of knowledge to work. There will be increased pressure on education, business and industry through globalisation, technology and new knowledge and learning to develop partnerships to teach these skills because as Dawkins (2002) says, ‘...no entity which is part of the knowledge economy can survive unless its employees keep their creative edge by continuing to learn’ (Beare, 2002, p.1). This pressure for on-going change will require organisations to diversify from traditional practices.

2.5.7 Environmental Sustainability

In a rapidly changing world where global warming and pollution issues have become increasingly important, knowledge society members are also realising that natural resources are finite. This has led to global agreements, such as Kyoto, that aim to reduce the environmental impact of the population on the planet. The following definition explains the scope of the environment: ‘...represents all the resources provided by the planet in the form of raw materials, plants and animals, and the understanding that this is a finite resource, and there is an undesirability in unsustainable consumption’ (Association of Independent Schools, 2004, p.39). Value is now given to discussions about sustainable resources or agriculture and industry practices so that there is a link between environmental practices and economic practices that will ensure global sustainability. ‘ ...learning how to establish sustainable relationships with our natural environment based on conservation of resources and our human environment by means of cooperation and partnerships of all community sectors, and a concern for quality of life measures’ (Faris, 2001, p.12). The growing emphasis

on industry and agricultural practices being environmentally sustainable is impacting on communities and in particular rural communities.

Analysis

There are many factors impacting on society today but the key factors affecting the education sector of a community are health and well-being, social isolation, civic engagement, economic diversity and environmental sustainability. It should be noted that factors impacting on a community may be inter-related and have an impact on the achievement of several outcomes. For example, pressure for economic diversification could force community members to change employment and this may challenge traditional values and create social or health issues. The education sector can effectively influence the outcomes of an emerging knowledge society through schooling and the OECD learning community approach has been developed to activate this influence. As communities move further into a knowledge society environment, there has been an unprecedented demand for learning in all areas of Delor's four pillars of learning. Communities have not been able to meet this demand with the existing resources of their educational institutions and this has led them to seek different approaches to meeting this demand. The OECD learning community model is one such strategy.

The literature reviewed has explored the writings of two of the earliest researchers into the knowledge society because Toffler's social and Drucker's economic approach ensure a balanced view of the objectives that Faris mentions as part of the OECD learning community approach. The OECD has been included because it has 30 years of international research history that has guided schooling in many countries in the knowledge society age. Kearns (2005) and Ellyard (1998) provide a current view of learning in the knowledge society. Caldwell, Beare and Hargreaves are contemporary educators whose education perspective and recency give validity to the OECD learning community approach as a strategy for knowledge society communities. Faris and the Learning Towns evaluation provide a framework for examining the application of the OECD learning community approach to Australian communities. Australian government policy and reports from the last few years explore education in an Australian context. The next chapter outlines the methods used to collect research data in this project.

CHAPTER THREE

Research Methodology

Introduction

In this chapter the research method and processes used to collect quality data that has validity are described. First, the method of investigation and the reasons for choosing this approach are discussed. Second, the reasons for selection of the target communities are described. Thirdly, the data collection and analysis procedures for each research question are explained and finally, the measures taken to ensure the trustworthiness of findings and the limitations of the research are considered.

3.1 Choice of Approach

In order to draw conclusions about the questions that were posed in this research a qualitative, case study approach was taken. This approach best allowed the characteristics of a learning community to be investigated in their natural context. To develop knowledge and understandings that could be probed and analysed an array of data collection methods were used that included interviews, observation, anecdotal evidence and examination of school documents. As an important element of the study was description of phenomena that occurred in the community, the viewpoints of a range of members of the community were sought and they were given the opportunity to explain their point of view when responding to the interview questions. The interviews were structured to encourage participants to explore their knowledge and understandings as they spoke. In this way more information about the complexities of situations and events in the community could be obtained and this required the use of a qualitative approach rather than a quantitative study.

The choice of approach to research also needs to consider the context for the investigation which in this case was educational. According to Michael Bassey, a case study approach to research in an educational organisation has certain meaning. 'I define educational research as critical enquiry aimed at informing educational judgements and decisions in order to improve educational action' (Bassey, 2002, p.108). As the purpose

of the research was to critically examine schools using a learning community approach with a view to developing understandings that could be used to improve outcomes in other schools, this matches Bassey's definition. Using a case study approach to the investigation of each learning community enabled readers to relate to the research findings and learn from them and this was the intention of the research rather than to establish generalisations.

The approach to the research was qualitative because description is an integral feature of qualitative research and the research aimed to develop deep and rich understandings of each case study community to explore the actions and events that took place within that community. Sally Hutchinson adds the following criteria to a description of qualitative research '...a focus on context, 'lived' experience, patterns of experience, and finally judging or appraising' (Hutchinson, 1988, p.125). In this research the context of each case study community has important effects on the experiences of community members while a detailed description of experiences of community members and patterns of experience examines the partnerships established in each community and the participation levels of community members. The interpretative processes described by Hutchinson are used to develop understandings of the significance of actions and events that influence the partnerships described in each community in this study and investigate why they were established and what they have achieved. This information is then related to the OECD learning community model.

Qualitative research is subjective as researchers attribute their own meaning to events and actions; therefore, it is necessary for the reader to understand the perspective of the researcher. My background as an experienced educator and educational administrator has influenced the perspective of the research conducted in this study. I had well-established working relationships with members of the Case Study One community as a result of working with members as an education consultant and a long term knowledge of the community. However, I was only able to establish short term relationships with members of the Case Study Two community and this has resulted in a more critical perspective of the Case Study One community than the Case Study Two community. As Roizen and Jepsen, cited in Jerry Wellington (2000), suggest '...the richness of the material facilitates multiple interpretations by allowing the reader to use his own experiences to evaluate the data' (Wellington, 2000, p.100). Thus my

experience and knowledge of each community has influenced the evaluation and interpretation of data.

Cobb and Hagermaster's definition of a qualitative study outlined by Max Angus & Jan Gray (2002, p.56) has been used to provide a reference against which the research methods of this study can be evaluated to ensure credibility.

Table 1

Qualitative Study Design

Definition	Relevant aspects of this study
Importance of context	Information of the context of each community in this study was obtained to give meaning to strategies used to achieve a learning community approach and provide an understanding of the knowledge society issues involved.
Emic view of the world	Interviews with a variety of members of the education community provided an opportunity to understand their view of the school and community.
Inductive approach	Data was systematically collected to look for confirming and disconfirming evidence that described the issues and strategies in each community and school community.
Interaction with participants	The researcher personally interviewed participants in the field research and interacted with participants when examining documents.
Focus on understanding and description	Each case study describes how a learning community approach was developed with a view to enhancing understanding and examining causal relationships between learning community strategies and issues that are impacting on a community in an emerging knowledge society rather than reduce description to a series of statements.
On-going development of hypotheses	Each piece of data collected was examined with a view to developing a better understanding of a learning community and how knowledge society factors influence this community. As more data was examined better understandings developed. The refinement of understandings through examination of data also resulted in modification of the research questions.

Definition	Relevant aspects of this study
On-going development of instruments	Proposed data collection methods were subject to revision in the field. When it became apparent that more detailed school documentation would be beneficial or interview questions needed to be modified, then this was done. Proposed matrices to organise data were responsive to data collected and were adjusted accordingly.
Narrative	Data collected is largely presented as a narrative account. A narrative account is ‘...the exploration and analysis of the case with a strong sense of a time line’ (Bassey, 2002, p.112). A timeline and a causal model have been included to visually demonstrate the relationships between responses to the first question. A narrative explores and analyses information collected for each case study. A cross-case study narrative compares data from both schools. The choice of a narrative approach for the study also enabled the researcher to ‘...clarify ideas, identify what was known and what still needed to be found out...’ (Jackson, 2000, p.252).

Within the qualitative research paradigm there are many methodologies but a case study approach was chosen as it best fits the research conducted. Two communities were investigated using an in-depth approach that included collecting data from several sources before comparing patterns that emerged with the OECD learning community model. This approach fits with James Cresswell’s (1998) definition: ‘A qualitative case study provides an in-depth study of a ‘bounded system’ based on a diverse array of data collection materials, and the ‘researcher’ situates this system or case within its larger ‘context’ or setting’ (Cresswell, 1998, p.249).

The case study approach used for this research contained the following elements of Cresswell’s definition:

- Each case study community described in this research was examined at a defined time and this is a ‘bounded system’. It is recognised that each community is a dynamic, ever-changing context and that data collected at a certain time is only valid at that particular time.

- An array of data collection methods was used by conducting field interviews, observations, anecdotal evidence and the examination of school documentation. The examination of school documentation provided the operational details of a learning community approach and interviews with school community members enabled the complexities of implementation to be explored. Information gained from Faris' view of the OECD theoretical framework described in the literature review added a broader context to these perspectives.
- Data collection methods endeavoured to obtain rich and deep information about each community and school. In particular, focused interviews with a selected cross-section of school community members enabled individual perspectives to be analysed and a richer understanding to be gained. As the Education Department for each case study school required that consultative processes be used to determine school policy and activities, it was hoped that examination of school documents would provide a 'whole school' insight into the school community. However, participant responses were sought to determine the extent that policy became practice.
- The evidence was collected from each school site or natural setting.
- In order to answer the research questions posed, the study relates data collected to a larger context or theoretical framework. The larger context for the data collected in this project was based on literature research into the OECD model of a learning community. Each case study was examined individually before connections to the OECD model were established and an across case study was conducted to seek themes and possible patterns.

However, as the research context is educational, there were several elements of the case study approach that were specific to an educational enquiry including the purpose for the research. Although the depth and richness of data required by a case study approach can make it very time consuming, it was hoped that the results would provide valuable information for the researcher and the patterns that emerged could be useful for other communities to develop understandings regarding a learning community

approach. Louis Cohen and Lawrence Manion (1989) view the purpose of an educational case study approach to be ‘... to probe deeply and to analyse intensively the... phenomena that constitute the lifecycle of the unit (community) with a view to establishing generalisations about the wider population to which that unit belongs’ (Cohen and Manion, 1989, p.124). While the case study approach used in this research probes and analyses the phenomena of two learning communities as suggested by Cohen and Manion, there is no intention to establish generalisations. The intention of the research fits more closely with Bassey’s definition as aiming to inform and improve educational actions.

Bassey’s description of an educational case study includes criteria already mentioned by Cobb, Hagermaster and Cresswell as being applicable to a qualitative case study approach. However the following additional elements are particularly relevant to an educational enquiry and the research undertaken.

Table 2

Educational Case Study

Definition	Relevant aspects of this study
Enquiry into interesting aspects of an educational activity, or programme, or institution or system	The educational activity or program being researched is a learning community approach to schooling in Australian communities.
Enquiry in order to inform the judgements and decisions of practitioners or policy-makers	Aspects of a learning community approach could be used by educators in other contexts.
Enquiry to explore significant features of the case	Investigation of the partnerships that support communities in an emerging knowledge society environment.
Enquiry to create plausible interpretations of what is found	Interpretations of the connections between learning community strategies and issues emerging in society.
Enquiry to relate the argument or story to any relevant research in the literature	The cross-case analysis maps the learning community approach of the case study communities against the OECD model of a learning community described in the literature review.

(Bassey, 2002, p.109)

3.3 Target Communities

Two communities identified as having a learning community approach were selected as case studies. One was identified because it participated in the Victorian Learning Towns Program and the program objectives indicated it contained the key elements outlined in the OECD learning community definition. The second town in Western Australia was identified from discussion with two District Directors as demonstrating the elements of lifelong learning and agreed objectives that are common to a learning community approach. Each town was located in a rural area with a population of a similar size. However, each town has a unique context and different reasons for developing a learning community approach to education.

One primary school within each of these communities was selected as the focus for the case studies. The schools selected were both large primary schools of a similar size. Multiple cases were selected to provide sufficient evidence to develop possible themes or patterns that may be useful for other schools and communities.

3.4 Data Collection

Data was collected to describe the setting or context of each school and multiple sources of information were used to gather a detailed description that enabled a rich understanding of the complexity of the issues involved. Multiple sources of information were used to enable triangulation of different views that would create a ‘thick’ description.

Table 3

Data Sources

Case Study One	Case Study Two
Interviews	Interviews
Anecdotal evidence	Educational Functions, anecdotal evidence
Web pages - Shire Plan and community context	Web pages - learning communities and community context
Visions Committee minutes (1998-2003) , specific project brochures	Secondary College Charter and Information Booklets, Community Learning Centre Pamphlets.

Two main methods were used to gather data. The first method was interviews with representatives of the key educational stakeholders in a community as outlined below:

Table 4
Participants Interviewed

	Case Study 1	Case Study 2
Parents	1	1
Administrators	3	3
Students	6	2
Teacher Leaders	3	2
Drought Coordinator		1
Community education leaders		2

The different points of view from members of the school community were sought to provide a richness of data and a broader perspective of the community. Data collected aimed to provide an educational perspective of the learning community model in the town.

In each case study there were several participants who had dual roles that may have influenced their responses. In the Case Study 1 community, the parent interviewed was president of the school parent body and had been president of the Shire Council while the parent interviewed in the Case Study 2 community was also a member of the non-teaching staff. One Case Study 1 teacher leader was also a parent in that community.

The questions that were used as a framework for interviews are listed in Appendix One. This framework was devised once the questions that directed the research enquiry were agreed. Some were worded as open ended questions about the community that encouraged participants to be descriptive. In each Case Study community there were participants who provided detailed descriptions and several whose responses were very brief. This resulted in some inequitable representation of participants when reporting data in Chapter Four and Five. The questions about partnerships in the community required specific information. Prior to commencement of the interviews, the questions were tested on several colleagues and adjusted as a result

of their feedback. Further refinements were made as the interviews proceeded and the data was collected. The questions were sent to coordinators of the interviews who passed on a general overview of the questions to participants selected for interview. The researcher used the questions as a framework for interviews with participants.

The Principal from a primary school in each community was asked to organise participant interviews. In each community the Principal was provided with the questions for each interview, an estimate of the time necessary for each interview, the cross-section of participants to be interviewed and the aims of the research. In the Case Study 1 school the Principal had circulated the questions and made tentative arrangements for interviews with the cross-section of participants. Interviews were then arranged and conducted according to the school timetable and participant availability. In the Case Study 2 community contact was established with a primary school principal who liaised with a secondary principal to organise a timetable for interviews. However, both principals were absent for part of the four day data collection period, and as the interview schedule was very loosely established, interviews with selected participants were arranged according to their availability.

Most interviews were conducted with individual participants. However, in the Case Study 2 community, a group interview was conducted with the two community education leaders and the drought coordinator. Group interviews were also conducted with students in Case Study 1. Questions for these interviews were structured to encourage students to diagrammatically represent their views on lifelong learning and partnerships before oral discussion of the concepts. Student information confirmed partnerships and the school community understanding of lifelong learning. In Case Study 2 where the students were older, 15 years of age, they provided confirming evidence regarding factors affecting the community and activities that the community had initiated to address these factors. In each school community arranging for interviews with parent representatives appeared to be difficult for coordinators to organise and their perspective is not adequately represented. In the Case Study 1 community interviews were arranged with the proposed cross-section of community members but in the Case Study 2 community when opportunities arose for interviews with other members of the community these offers were accepted. An example of this was the drought coordinator. The inclusion of other members of the community

provided further information about the community to support the data collected from the primary school community.

Interviews with members of the Case Study 1 community were conducted over a two day period with one several weeks later while interviews in the Case Study 2 community were spread over four days. In the Case Study 1 community, interviews were structured; while in the Case Study 2 community, interviews were semi-structured. Wellington (2000) describes a structured interview as ‘...a set of pre-determined questions in a set order...’ and a semi-structured interview as an ‘...interview schedule specifying key areas but order of questions is not fixed’ (Wellington, 2000, p.95). Interviews with individual Case Study 1 community members asked participants to describe the context, the objectives, partnerships and lifelong learning as outlined in Appendix One. When participants required clarification of questions, this was provided and probing of responses was done to elicit further information when appropriate. Some interviews with Case Study 2 community members were relatively impromptu and, as a result, were less structured and largely covered the elements outlined in Appendix One. As the researcher had little background knowledge of this community, more clarifying questions of participants interviewed were asked to enhance understandings and knowledge.

Data from interviews was taped onto audio cassettes and notes of each interview were taken. Unexpected responses that provided a different but relevant line of enquiry were noted and followed up with other participants. For example in Case Study 1 after one participant mentioned the impact that discontinuity in leadership had had on the school community, this issue was raised with other participants.

An important aspect of data collection in the Case Study 2 community was my involvement in educational activities that occurred in the community during the period of the four day visit. Wellington believes that this participation is an important part of a case study and describes participant observation as where ‘...the researcher is more than a passive observer and participates in the events being studied’ (Wellington, 2000, p.95). Case Study 2 community members actively encouraged me, as the researcher, to become immersed in educational activities in the town, including staff meetings, a

project launch and business forum. Involvement in these activities provided observations and anecdotal evidence that could be used to confirm evidence gathered from interviews and documentation.

The second proposed data collection method was to examine school documentation about the community context, school planning and policy and accountability measures. In Case Study 1 school documentation regarding planning, policy and accountability was not available because it had been reviewed earlier in the week and had not yet been formatted but participants discussed relevant aspects of the documentation in their interviews and this proved to be sufficient information. However, transcripts of minutes from meetings held by the committee who led the implementation of a learning community approach were examined to provide evidence to complement interview data. Evidence gained from the minutes included timelines, actions, strategies, policy, context, and personnel involved in implementing a learning community approach.

The Case Study 2 school community provided a school development plan, annual report, induction and promotional pamphlets that described school policy, planning, priorities, context and accountability. This information was used to give additional insights and evidence for questions one and two.

Finally, while the basic data collection methods used were similar in each case study, the use of a qualitative approach enabled the on-going development of instruments to best suit the uniqueness of each community.

3.5 Procedure for Analysis of Data

The procedure for analysing the data collected in each case study was:

Firstly, a within case analysis was conducted to describe the significant aspects of how the learning community was established. Secondly, the partnerships that each primary school established to achieve outcomes that would prepare them for the knowledge

society were examined. Finally, the findings were mapped against the OECD learning community model in an across case analysis.

Categories described in each of the matrices used have provided a framework to organise data. These were refined as a result of the findings collected and literature reviewed. Matrix 1, for example, was initially a framework based upon the interview questions and included categories of context, lifelong learning, objectives and partnerships. However, in order to respond to the first question of the research, partnerships was removed and the focus became the key elements of a learning community approach identified in the OECD model, lifelong learning and objectives. A description of the community was included to explain the context of each case study. Information on partnerships established by each school then became an element of the response to question two.

To answer question 1: *How is a learning community approach established?*

The following steps were used to systematically examine evidence collected from each case study community:

1. Interviews were taped onto audio cassettes and transcribed.
2. Responses from the transcripts were examined and organised according to Matrix 1.
3. Information collated in Matrix 1 was examined for confirming and disconfirming evidence.
4. Common themes and patterns were identified.
5. Photocopies of written documentation were obtained where possible.
6. Written documentation was examined for confirming or disconfirming evidence using the matrix described for each question.
7. Diagrams and causal models were developed to describe connections between the data collected.
8. A narrative using participant's language to give meaning to their experiences was used to describe findings (see Chapter 4 for Case Study 1 and Chapter 5 for Case Study 2).

9. The findings were analysed to answer the question.

MATRIX 1

How themes were organised to enable analysis of the data for question 1.

	Case Study One- M1	Case Study Two- K1
Context		
Lifelong learning		
Objectives		

The across case analysis of question one findings sought to examine themes or patterns from both communities and map them against the definition for the OECD learning community model that literature research has described in Chapter Two. The following procedures were used;

1. A column was added to map significant features of the OECD model against the data collected in Matrix 1.
2. Data from Matrix 2 was examined for common themes and patterns.
3. A narrative was constructed to relate the case study findings to the OECD model (see Chapter 6).

MATRIX 2

How themes were organised to analyse across case patterns for question 1.

	OECD Model	Case Study One- M1	Case Study Two- K1
Context			
Lifelong learning			
Objectives			

To analyse question 2: *To what extent does a learning community approach support primary schools to establish partnerships that address the needs of their communities in an emerging knowledge society environment?*

The following procedures were used:

1. Field research interviews were conducted in each school community. Participant responses identified community issues that were transcribed as part of each interview.
2. The issues identified by participants were then mapped against the outcomes Faris identified as necessary to prepare a community for the knowledge society (see Matrix 3). There was some overlap of issues between categories.
3. School documentation was examined and confirming or disconfirming evidence was added to the outcomes described in Matrix 3.
4. A narrative described the findings for each case study school community.
5. The transcripts of the field research interviews were then examined for evidence of the partnerships that each school community had developed to address each outcome. Participation in community activities was added to the description of the partnerships established. A narrative described the findings.
6. School documentation was examined for further evidence.
7. Analysis of the partnerships established was conducted to determine the extent to which partnerships had addressed community issues and enabled the achievement of the outcomes.
8. A narrative analysed the findings of the individual schools in relation to question two.

MATRIX 3:

Data organisation to enable description and analysis of the findings for question 2.

Outcomes for a Knowledge Society Community	(Community issues) <i>MI School</i>	(Community issues) <i>KI School</i>
<i>Healthy Communities</i>		
<i>Social Inclusion and Civic Engagement</i>		
<i>Economic Diversification</i>		
<i>Environmental Sustainability</i>		

The criteria used to measure the extent that a learning community approach has achieved the outcomes of question two are taken from a toolkit called *Practice, progress and value- learning communities* developed by the Department for Education and Employment (1998) to measure the value they added to towns and cities in the United Kingdom. The criteria developed by DfEE and the Learning Cities Network formed the basis for Faris' evaluation of learning community models in British Columbia in 2001 and were used by the La Trobe University research team of Sheed & Bottrell (2001) when they investigated the Victorian Learning Towns Program. As one of the learning communities examined in this research was involved in the Victorian Learning Towns Program using the same criteria could enable connections to be made between my research and the earlier research.

The DfEE toolkit states that '...there are three strands of development that characterise the building of a learning culture within a learning town, city or shire. They are:

- Partnership - learning to build connections between sectors;
- Participation - learning to involve the public in the policy process;
- Performance - engagement in formal education processes and the connecting of many kinds of learning: in the workplace, the voluntary organisation and the family; and evaluation of the learning processes engaged in' (Sheed & Bottrell, 2001, p.45).

Further investigation of these criteria is necessary to clarify their meaning in the context of this research. Partnership '...tends to refer to bodies comprising representatives of a number of different types of agencies or organisations which come together to oversee or manage a joint activity' (DfEE, 2005, p.2). In the context of a learning community this would be representatives of organisations from one or more sectors of the community who come together for a specific purpose. Participation has been given several meanings by researchers. DfEE (1998) indicates that a key meaning is the involvement of the public in policy and processes that promote learning and contribute towards changes within the community. The La Trobe researchers of Learning Towns in Victoria describe participation in an Australian context as '...involvement in education and training activities in a range of sectors...' (Sheed & Bottrell, 2001, p.42). Faris describes participation as '...fostering participation of all...'

(Faris, 2001, p.5). My research examined the level of participation of community members from a range of sectors in learning opportunities within the community.

Peter Kearns broadened the three criteria of the DfEE toolkit to five for an evaluation of the ANTA National Learning Community Project in 2001. 'We developed the three strands of development to five (planning, promotion, partnership, participation, performance)...' (Kearns, 2002, p.3). However, Kearns admitted that while these were useful tools to audit learning communities, he would prefer a simpler approach. 'I would now simplify the instrument and make it more flexible...' (Kearns, 2002, p.3).

The La Trobe researchers suggest that '...the milestones in the first year of developing a learning community cluster around establishing partnerships, in the second year participation and in the third year performance' (Sheed & Bottrell, 2001, p.45). While data collected in this project can provide judgements regarding partnerships and participation the extent to which performance has been improved is beyond the scope of this research. Therefore, the criteria used to evaluate the extent to which a learning community approach enables a primary school community to achieve outcomes is based upon the partnerships formed between community sectors and the participation of community members in the learning opportunities offered by these partnerships rather than the performance of the community in '...engaging in formal education processes and the connecting of many kinds of learning...and evaluation of the learning processes engaged in' (Sheed & Bottrell, 2001, p.45). Aspects of the planning and promotion of a learning community mentioned by Kearns as evaluation criteria are discussed in response to question one.

The second question has proved to be far more complex to analyse. The initial research proposal included six knowledge society factors including globalisation, knowledge, technology, health and well-being, economic diversity and accountability. From evidence gained in literature research, these factors have been re-organised so that globalisation, knowledge and technology are explained as the drivers of change in the knowledge society while accountability is mentioned as an aspect of the causal model describing a learning community approach. The knowledge society factors are now described as the outcomes that using a learning community approach in an emerging knowledge society should achieve. These outcomes are: healthy communities, social inclusion and civic engagement, economic diversity and environmental sustainability.

The issues or needs of the case study communities are then organised according to the effect they have on these outcomes.

The following steps were used to conduct an across case analysis of question 2 themes or patterns:

1. The case study community information in Matrix 3 was examined across cases to determine common themes.
2. The issues in each community were explored to determine similarities and differences.
3. The partnerships schools developed through the use of a learning community approach were examined to determine the extent to which community issues were addressed. Participation provided a measure of the extent that community members were involved in the learning partnerships established to address issues.
4. A narrative related the findings to relevant research literature.

The timelines outlining procedures and data collection follow.

Table 5

Research Timelines

Date	Case Study	Procedures
2003/04		Literature review, proposal development
Sept, 2004		Proposal submission
Nov, 2004	One	Field research-Interviews and documentation collection.
Jan, 2005	One	Transcripts of interviews. Organisation of data into matrices.
April, 2005	Two	Field research-interviews and documentation collection.
July, 2005	Two	Transcripts of interviews. Organisation of data into matrices. Causal models, diagrams were developed. First draft of Case Study one and two findings.
Sept, 2005	One & Two	Mapping of data collected against reference materials. First draft of thesis. Review of theoretical understandings from literature.
Oct, 05- Jan, 06	Thesis	On-going drafting, research and review of thesis findings.

3.6 Trustworthiness of the Research

The concepts of reliability and validity have specific and agreed meanings when conducting quantitative research but are the subject of debate in relation to qualitative case study research. Bassey prefers Lincoln and Guba's (1985) alternative of trustworthiness and has drawn on their work to devise eight questions that promote 'the ethic of respect for truth in case study research' (Bassey, 1999, p.75). The following processes used to ensure trustworthiness in this research have been organised according to Bassey's questions.

- As an experienced educator I used her knowledge of education to become immersed in the investigation and build the trust of participants. This ensured 'prolonged engagement with data sources'.
- The findings were thoroughly examined for significant features. This is 'persistent observation of emerging issues'.
- Data from a variety of sources enabled checking of analytical statements. This ensured 'sufficient triangulation of data' before features were described.
- A 'critical friend' has examined the research project and challenged the processes and analysis of the findings.
- A detailed description of each case study is provided. The aim has been to provide an account of the research which is 'sufficiently detailed to give the reader confidence'.
- Extracts and written quotations are included to show language of participants as well as the researcher.
- A detailed and adequate audit trail has been maintained.

The only measure of trustworthiness described by Bassey that has not been addressed in this research is the checking of interview data with participants and this has not been done due to time constraints and the logistics of contacting all participants (Bassey, 1999, p.76).

3.7 Limitations

The extent to which the reader can seek patterns or themes gained from examination of the data gathered in this research is limited by these factors:

- Number of individual case studies - the research is limited to case studies of two schools to collect quality data that has depth.
- Context of schools - primary schools of a similar size were selected because the researcher has extensive experience in this context and it is felt that this experience would add depth and authenticity to the findings.
- My relationship with Case Study 1 community members meant that responses appeared open, honest and critical whereas Case Study 2 community members seemed more inclined to promote their community with positive responses.
- Parent participants from each school community were under-represented with one person from each community being interviewed.
- The practicality of organising the interviewing of a sample of busy people in a short space of time meant there were some compromises.
- School community documentation to support participant interviews in Case Study One was limited.
- Field interviews were the primary source of data collection with school documentation being used to provide supporting evidence.

Bassey describes three concerns regarding case study research in education that were expressed by Walker:

- It can be an uncontrolled intervention into the lives of others;
- It can give a distorted view of the world; and
- Can have a tendency to embalm practices that are always changing (Bassey, 1999, p.35).

These concerns will need to be considered as limitations to the research although attempts were made to minimize the effects. For example, the interviews with participants were carefully planned and coordinated with

approximate timelines provided to participants to minimize the disruption to their lives. However, within the context of a normal, busy day it was difficult for the participants to arrange time for interviews and this did result in some interviews being less structured and detailed than others. A broad cross section of participants was selected to be interviewed in order to give an educative view of the learning community; however, it needs to be remembered that the view of other sectors of the community could be quite different. As each of these communities is a dynamic changing situation, the practices and relationships will have changed. These limitations will need to be considered when examining the emerging patterns and themes of these findings.

CHAPTER FOUR

Case Study One-M1

The purpose of this chapter is to present the data collected on the community researched in Case Study One. This community will hereafter be referred to as M1. An analysis of the data obtained is made in relation to research question one and two:

1. *How is a learning community approach established in the M1 community?*
2. *To what extent does a learning community approach support an M1 primary school to establish partnerships to address the needs of its community in an emerging knowledge society environment?*

An educational sector point of view is used to answer the questions as data was collected from a school community (see Fig: 1).

The chapter is divided into two parts that correspond to the two research questions. The response to the first question includes a description of data collected and an analysis of these findings. Findings are analysed in relation to Faris' description of the OECD learning community model in order to better understand a learning community approach. Information is examined according to the elements that define a learning community (Ref: Chapter 1). These are:

- Lifelong learning
- Objectives

The response to the second question presents findings in two sections. The first section identifies the community needs of the M1 school community under the sub-headings that have been identified in the Literature Review by Faris' as key outcomes for a community in an emerging knowledge-based society.

- Healthy communities
- Social inclusion and civic engagement
- Economic diversification
- Environmental sustainability

The second section analyses the extent to which the M1 school community has developed partnerships that will address the identified factors. The participation of community members in the partnerships developed is described in qualitative terms and according to the community sectors that are involved.

A conclusion describes connections between the partnerships established in the community and the outcomes to be achieved in a knowledge society environment.

There were 13 participants in the study who are identified as MP1-MP13 to preserve anonymity.

Quotes used from interviews are acknowledged thus:

MP1 Both parents are working.

Part One

4.1 Context

The M1 community is located in the south-west of Western Australia. It is the hub for the delivery of services and industry to a number of smaller outlying towns. Industry in the area has been predominantly agricultural. It is a working class community composed of a large group of third generation European and British migrants and an increasing number of indigenous families. In recent years there has been an influx of low socio-economic families due to the availability of cheap government accommodation. Some of these families are transient, dependent on government assistance and an increasing number have mental health issues related to drug or alcohol dependency.

The community supports two primary schools, a senior high school, a TAFE centre and a Catholic school that caters for students from K-12. Students from several nearby towns are bussed in to complete Year 11 and 12 studies.

In 1993 a group of business, education, local government, industry and community representatives formed a committee to promote lifelong learning through

improving education, training and recreation opportunities in the community. This chapter explores their journey towards creating their vision.

The following timeline outlines the key events that occurred during this journey.

Table 6: Time line of relevant events in the M1 community

Year	Action
1992	Public meeting. High school initiated community meetings.
1993	Establishment of Visions Committee. Community needs analysis. Concept plan for the multi-purpose campus developed.
1994	
1995	Stage 1: Planning
1996	
1997	Stage 1: Upgrade of Senior high school facilities in science, technology was completed.
1998	Key Government ministers meet with Visions Committee. Shire survey on joint recreational facility.
1999	Consultancy employed to promote visions. Visions Brochure developed. Government funding approved in 2002/03 budget for recreational facilities. Shire chairmanship commenced.
2000	Stage 2: Upgrade of senior high school completed. Co-location of TAFE on the multi campus site.
2001	Old-growth logging ceased
2002	
2003	Heated swimming pool to be completed mid-2005. ECU links available through the on-line courses at high school technology centre.
2004	
2005	Heated pool completed. Final stages of construction of the primary school and Education Support Centre on the multi-purpose campus site. Ready for occupancy 2006.

The OECD model of a learning community promotes lifelong learning as an organising principle and this was certainly a feature of the Visions Committee concept for education in the M1 community.

The multi-purpose campus will utilize the latest information and communication technology to deliver seamless, lifelong educational opportunities for the M1 community' (Promotional brochure, 1999).

The next section examines data collected on lifelong learning in the M1 community.

4.2 Lifelong learning

While it is evident that the vision statement for future education in the M1 community included lifelong learning as an aspect of the statement, the main focus for the vision statement was the development of a multi-purpose campus to deliver educational and recreational facilities that would provide lifelong opportunities for community members. Lifelong learning was described as an outcome of the educational opportunities offered by the multi-purpose campus while lifelong learning according to the OECD learning community model is used as an organizing principle or social goal.

When the committee engaged professional consultants to promote the vision to the community, the consultant's purpose was described as:

To extend community understanding of, and stimulate community enthusiasm for, the opportunities afforded for lifelong learning, employment and leisure through the development of the M1 multi-purpose campus. (Consultancy brief, 1999)

The brief clearly includes lifelong learning as an integral part of the consultant's purpose but again the focus is on the facilities that will provide lifelong learning opportunities.

The consultants were given a timeframe of 24 weeks in which to develop and implement an information strategy for the M1 community regarding the vision statement and develop partnerships between education, business and industry to promote education, employment and lifelong learning. During this period they were responsible for developing and implementing strategies such as media briefings and press releases, pamphlets, newsletters and a logo. Visions Committee minutes indicate that, with committee approval, the consultancy strategy focused largely on developing community understanding of the multi-purpose campus as indicated in a consultant report to the Visions Committee.

A blueprint has been developed... It keeps recreational and educational functions separated and highlighted... [It] has deliberately kept away from logos and naming at this stage and stuck to M1 Multi-Purpose Campus. (Visions Committee minutes, June, 1999)

So while lifelong learning was a feature of the vision statement, what was promoted to the community were the physical recreational and educational facilities that would be available on the new campus rather than the activities and lifelong learning was not used as an organizing principle to promote the learning opportunities.

The Visions Committee had been in existence for a number of years before the support of consultants was sought to promote the vision. During this time the committee had developed the vision statement through discussion amongst committee members and consultation with the community. Throughout this period the key focus of the vision had been to establish the multi-purpose campus with lifelong learning an outcome that was attached to the vision. However, a common understanding of the lifelong learning aspect of the vision was never established amongst committee members or promoted in the community. And while lifelong learning was mentioned in the vision statement, it does not appear to have been a key aspect of the Visions Committee approach to learning in the community. Two participants supported the notion that lifelong learning was an aspect of the vision that was not promoted by the committee.

MP2 I don't think they had ever really investigated that.

MP7 It was part of the visions. I don't think we've done that very well. I think the [campus] took over that vision.

These two participants had been members of the Visions Committee for several years, with one a founding member. Both had a sound understanding of the vision and the consultation that had been involved in establishing and implementing the vision.

However, the responses of several teachers in the primary school indicated they strongly believed that lifelong learning was an essential element of their school community.

MP1 Lifelong learning underpins everything.

MP5 We like to think it is constantly being promoted.

MP6 I think we're doing a really good job at that.

While these participants believed that lifelong learning was an important organizing principle in their school community they did not have a common understanding of the concept with their comments indicating a wide range of understandings.

- MP3 Being promoted far more with staff. Staffs are not able to sit and not take part with learning. With children it is a philosophy that we are pushing-developmental learning-these are the building blocks that we are using to build on.
- MP4 We actually try to target learning skills. We are actually going to pick up philosophy in education next year.
- MP5 In a way any learning must be lifelong and must be beneficial for the next step in your life.
- MP6 With the beginning of our philosophy course and a lot of teachers attending the philosophy course I think we've done really well in our school plan to promote lifelong learning.

Students interviewed in the M1 primary school also did not have a common understanding of lifelong learning with most saying that they did not know what lifelong learning was and one made the following comment

- MP10 Is it learning all the time in your life?

Teacher participants acknowledged that no discussion to establish a common understanding had occurred at the school or the community level with one participant indicating that lifelong learning was not an explicit goal of their documented school vision. Participants were unable to describe how lifelong learning was promoted in their school community and none of them made connections between lifelong learning and the Visions Committee statement or as a goal of the multi-purpose campus.

Analysis

While the Visions Committee statement contained lifelong learning, the committee seems to have focused on promoting the physical improvement of education and training facilities to the community and has been very successful in achieving this objective. The rationale appears to be that the building of new physical facilities at the multi-purpose campus would create '...seamless, lifelong educational opportunities...'

for the community (Visions Brochure, 1999). Therefore, lifelong learning has been viewed as an outcome of the new multi-purpose campus rather than an organizing principle as described in the OECD definition.

If we consider Delors' four pillars of lifelong learning and Brown's overlapping sites of learning in relation to the M1 community we find that the key focus of the Visions Committee was to provide better educational opportunities for school and tertiary aged students in the *learning to know* and *learning to do* pillars with a definite focus on formal educational sites. The research revealed little evidence of partnerships that addressed the *learning to be* and *learning to live together* aspects of learning or used the workplace and community sites described by Brown. The focus has clearly been on education rather than lifelong learning. As this participant says, the focus for the committee was to develop an educational vision for the community rather than promote lifelong learning.

P7 ...this committee of local people who desired to drive an educational future not only for the town but for the region.

The concept of an educational future developed by the Visions Committee focused on providing the formal learning opportunities that were traditionally offered to students from kindergarten to university. The vision was to broaden or extend the range of opportunities that were offered to students of these ages rather than broaden the understanding of education to include lifelong learning opportunities from birth to death.

In particular this will broaden the opportunities for post-secondary students in the M1 area (Visions brochure, 1999).

The vision statement, like the OECD model, included developing partnerships with business and industry to increase learning opportunities and promote education.

A significant opportunity is available to develop customised educational services in partnership with industry (Visions brochure, 1999).

But again the focus is on education rather than integrating Delors' pillars of lifelong learning into the three overlapping sites outlined by Brown in Chapter Two. In fact the

key site is seen to be the multi-purpose campus that has as its purpose learning for the workplace and learning through formal education and training. Brown's other sites of learning, in the workplace, informal learning and community based learning, are not explicitly considered or mentioned in the vision statement or by any participants interviewed from the education sector.

In conclusion, although the M1 community included lifelong learning as an aspect of their vision statement it was not the organizing principle or social goal for the development of learning in their community. The establishment of agreed objectives in the M1 community is examined in the next section.

4.3 Objectives

The second key element of the OECD learning community approach is that objectives that are set and owned by the community will be developed to prepare for the emerging knowledge society. The objectives of the M1 community are examined to determine what they are, how they were developed and why they were developed.

4.3.1 What are the key objectives?

The Visions Committee was responsible for developing the objectives for education in the M1 community and their objectives were framed as a vision statement for educational and recreational facilities in the community rather than a set of structured and sequential objectives.

The development of a multi-purpose campus to provide educational and community today and well into the future (Promotional brochure, 1999).

The strength of the vision statement lay in the tangible focus on creating physical buildings and facilities to meet the real needs of aged, inadequate education and recreational facilities. The highly visual need for new physical facilities gained the support and interest of the community and resulted in a strong commitment to the achievement of this aspect of the vision.

MP7 I think the most important thing to know was that it was a community driven thing.

However, while the community fully supported the vision of renewed educational and recreation facilities placing these facilities on a single campus created some dissension in the community. Community agreement was gained for educational facilities to be on the one campus but the sharing of recreational facilities, including a sports arena and performing arts centre, at the multi-purpose campus site was never quite as successful because local sporting and community groups felt that they were already 'locked' out of community facilities located on educational sites. During the planning period several of these groups chose to go their own way:

...the vision concerning the co-location of a recreational facility has fallen behind. The local Netball and Basketball Associations...were successful in gaining funding independently for the upgrading of their centre. (Visions Committee minutes, 1998)

Despite the attempts of the Visions Committee to inform and promote the co-location of facilities the fears of the community were never completely allayed and the sharing of recreational facilities on the one site has been limited.

The development of educational and recreational facilities on a multi-purpose campus also aimed to address objectives of educational partnerships with industry as mentioned earlier, utilization of the latest information and communication technology, and promotion of lifelong learning.

...utilise the latest information and communication technology to deliver seamless, lifelong educational opportunities for the M1 community. (Promotional brochure, 1999)

These three aspects of the vision statement were far less prominent in participant discussions than the multi-purpose campus itself. Participants interviewed made no mention of educational partnerships that had been established with industry making it difficult to draw any conclusion on the achievement of this objective. Although, if significant educational partnerships had been achieved, they would have been promoted in the community and it is likely that they would have been mentioned by participants.

Evidence collected from participants regarding the use of the latest information, communication and technology to deliver educational opportunities for the community indicated that technology had been established to deliver on-line learning opportunities

in partnership with a local university. Responses suggested that the effectiveness of this as a community facility was yet to be realized with comments indicating that they would need to be based at the multi-purpose campus in order to take advantage of these opportunities.

MP1 Teachers will have access to ... the [university] facility.

MP4 Maybe we will get more involved in that once we move on site [multi-purpose campus].

This would suggest that there were some limitations to the extent that technology could offer the wider community the planned educational opportunities that were described in the vision statement.

The third objective of lifelong learning has already been discussed in some depth earlier in this chapter.

The overarching objectives of the Visions Committee were to be achieved through the involvement of the public in establishing partnerships between community sectors with the initial focus on partnerships between the Department for Education and Training, TAFE and the Shire Council. The connections established between these groups were to benefit and provide further opportunities for other partnerships to develop between industry, the community and education that would ensure social advantages, a community sense of belonging, attract more people seeking a better lifestyle and stimulate economy, recreation, arts and culture.

4.3.2 How were the objectives developed?

The vision statement was developed by a leadership group after extensive community consultation. To gain the endorsement of the M1 community for the objectives or vision statement, a number of strategies were used.

Initially a leadership committee was established after a joint Shire and Education Department facilitated public consultation forum on the future of education and training in the M1 community. Members of the community invited to attend the forum were

from a broad cross-section of the community including local business, government, industry, education, service organizations and the community.

MP7 We ended up having a very large public meeting at the town hall where about 400 people...look the Town Hall was full anyway.

The initiators of this first public forum established and promoted a need for cohesive objectives for future education and ensured maximum community support by inviting members from all five sectors of the community described in the OECD learning model as needing to establish partnerships to mobilize learning resources.

One school community, the senior high school, followed this public forum with a meeting that sought to connect the findings of the public forum to their school community and from this second meeting the Visions Committee was established. Membership of the Visions Committee was comprised of education, shire, business, political, media and industry representatives and the chair was an educator. Governance membership of the committee consisted of 7 local government, community and industry and commerce representatives and 8 education representatives including TAFE, high school, primary schools, catholic school and District Director. Therefore, although each of the five community sectors listed in the OECD model were represented the balance of membership on the committee was educational.

MP7 I remember saying to someone at the time that the battle would be to keep the educators out of it because they would take over.

The vested interest of predominantly educational membership of the committee ensured that the key objective of educational facilities on the multi-purpose campus was progressed successfully but the less successful establishment of business and community partnerships may be a result of this imbalance. When chairmanship of the committee was transferred from an educator to a shire representative this was seen by one participant as a very positive move as ownership for the vision would remain clearly with the local community and not with educators who were bound by departmental policy.

MP2 ...the chairmanship became the shire president. ...then it was driven out of the shire and they had huge ownership of it. Very strategic and wise move.

The Visions Committee then sought further consultation with the community by coordinating several more community meetings and, in conjunction with the shire, conducting community needs analyses. The vision statement evolved from this consultation and information gathering.

MP2 ... the actual plan of the vision, the strategic plan was never really a strategic plan it was more a grand vision...

MP7 Strategies were set out in visions, mainly about facilities that weren't there...

Local government partnerships significantly facilitated the development of the key objectives of the vision statement through the sharing of resources to survey and consult with the community regarding community needs, expectations and planning issues. Shire involvement also provided an opportunity for community members to express their opinion and feel as if they were being listened to in the planning for the project. The commitment of the shire to the project and leadership in implementation ensured wider community understanding, promotion of the objectives and that shire plans were aligned with the Visions Project. The shire representative on the Visions Committee '...noted that this timeline is in line with the Shire's 5-Year Plan' (Visions Committee minutes, 2000).

State government partnerships were also important in enabling implementation of the vision statement. The vision was supported by the local member for parliament who was a member of the Committee. This politician coordinated the involvement of several government ministers with portfolios that were related to the vision.

Minister E. agreed to provide a coordinated response from the 3 ministers to the Shire. (Visions Committee minutes, 1998)

When the ministers met with Visions Committee members and Education Department representatives, they made a commitment to financially support implementation of the vision and agreed to a coordinated approach between the ministers and departments that were involved. This was a very strategic move that provided long term benefits for the Visions Committee particularly in accessing government support for funding of the objectives.

MP7 I mean [Education Ministers] referred often to our vision for a multi-purpose campus when making money available for the new school.

The following year a media consultancy was engaged by the Visions Committee to explore and extend the vision for the multi-purpose campus. The media consultancy was to promote the vision to the community and develop an understanding of the vision as a review had identified that despite the extensive community consultation already conducted, there were still many fears and misconceptions existing in the community regarding the multi-purpose campus.

Current problem seen as: all the negative information/misinformation is traveling in the community faster and more persistently than the positive. And that has highlighted our task. How to get the facts to the community. (Visions Committee minutes, February, 1999)

The consultancy worked with the Visions Committee to identify the specific groups that needed to be targeted for information and to address the fears and concerns of community members.

To facilitate the successful implementation of the proposed objectives the Visions Committee depended on the strong and dynamic leadership of its members with committee representatives being committed to coordinating support from their particular sector of the community. Just as the local member for parliament used his leadership skills to ensure government support, shire leaders took responsibility for ensuring that community support was maintained and education, business and community representatives were active in promoting and implementing the vision in their spheres of influence.

MP7 In the early days it was extremely powerful.

Visions Committee group members were proactive in involving the public in extensive and on-going consultation regarding the objectives of the committee. They initiated surveys, conducted a needs analysis and used a professional media consultancy firm to professionally document and facilitate public consultation and promotion of the vision to ensure that a clear understanding was gained by the community.

The expectation of the Visions Committee was that each leader of an organisation within the M1 community would use the vision statement as an overarching guide for the planning and future direction of their organisation. To promote this expectation membership of the Visions Committee was composed of leaders of education, local government, business, community and political organisations.

Educational leaders in the M1 community were all members of the Visions Committee and were responsible for integrating the visions statement into the objectives of each individual school community to provide a cohesive approach to learning in the community. In most instances leadership provided this cohesive approach however the degree that these objectives were integrated was dependent upon the leaders' ability and commitment to articulating and integrating the objectives into their school community. One participant commented that there was not a clear relationship between the visions and the school objectives at one school.

MP2 ... [was] not in line with the culture and the vision...

While a second participant commented that one school community leader had used visions to suit their own purposes rather than maintaining the integrity of the statement.

MP7 ...has really gone its own way and used visions when it was expedient...
but ignored visions for the rest of the time.

However, some educational leaders did use the Visions Committee objectives to direct the future of their organisations. For example, during planning for the re-location of one primary school and the education support centre to the multi-purpose campus site, each of these school communities examined their beliefs about teaching and learning and developed principles that would guide planning decisions. The Senior High School that was already located at the multi-campus site conducted similar consultation forums with their school community. From these processes each organization arrived at principles that were specific to their needs but could be aligned to establish common core beliefs and principles that fitted with the Visions Committee objectives. The common principles included information and communication technology, community and industry partnerships and lifelong learning. Thus the objectives of the Visions

Committee helped to provide an umbrella for each of these school communities and were valued enough to provide

MP2 ...an endorsement from the whole of the community.

However, not all educational leaders were committed to the vision statement and some did not use the objectives as overarching guidelines in their school communities.

In the primary school surveyed as part of this research the leadership had established a clear relationship between the Visions Committee and the school community through articulating a shared vision for the new primary school that linked to the vision statement as described in the above example. This vision was regularly discussed and shared with the school community. When the leadership changed this regular feedback was not sustained and links between the Visions Committee and the school community became less clear.

MP3 Not heard a lot since [the last principal] left.

Continuity of leadership was seen by several participants as essential for the promotion of the objectives of the vision and the establishment of partnerships between community members. This factor was mentioned by two participants because their school community had enjoyed strong leadership for several years and then had several different leaders in two years.

MP6 ...we've had such an upheaval with principals...that that's had a huge impact on everyone. Leadership [is] a real thing.

MP7 It needs a real leader at the moment...we've had a series of short term Principals.

Maintaining committed and continuous leadership of the vision has arisen as an issue for the Visions Committee because of the length of time that the committee has existed. The committee was established in 1993 and the vision developed the following year so the committee has been working towards the initial objectives for the last 12 years. During that time there have been many leadership changes with only two or three of the original members remaining on the committee. Despite the leadership changes,

sufficient impetus has been maintained to achieve the educational objectives of the vision statement.

In the M1 community a clear vision was established and driven by strong leadership who consulted extensively with the community and used strategic partnerships to enhance the achievement of their objectives. The next section examines why the vision was established.

4.3.3 Why were the objectives developed?

The first public meeting described in the previous section as the starting point for visions in the M1 community was driven by two Shire councilors who were concerned about the quality of educational opportunities available to their own children.

MP7 I became Shire President and with G, we decided that what we needed was a community view to drive any improvements in education. ...We wanted to have more say, here locally, about how our kids were educated and what opportunities they were given here.

MP2 The original meeting had...people talking about what they wanted for their kids. What opportunities they wanted.

Community members at the meeting identified issues such as a lack of tertiary and training opportunities for young people and a need to improve recreational facilities as concerns. There were concerns that in order to gain tertiary education, young students left town, sometimes even having to move interstate, and this meant that they often did not return to the community as they gained employment elsewhere so the community was losing a whole generation of young adults to the cities or larger towns.

MP7 We had a booming timber industry but anybody who wanted to study forestry had to go to Canberra to do it which was just crazy.

Several years after the Visions Committee was established two events occurred that significantly impacted on implementation of the community vision. The first was that the government legislated to prevent logging in old growth forests and the second was that overseas markets for the fruit and vegetable industry collapsed. In a

community that had for several generations relied heavily on timber and horticulture for employment, cut backs in these areas created an immediate need for re-training and the development of new business and industry opportunities. Tensions surrounding the political decision to cut old-growth logging forced the government to provide financial support for re-training and new business programs.

MP2 So politically we became more of a hot potato than we were before the timber industry collapse.

The Visions Committee worked closely with government agencies to address the issues of re-training through the provision of new TAFE facilities, an agricultural centre and on-line access to Edith Cowan University. As planned by the Visions Committee each of these new facilities was built on the multi-purpose campus site. Once these tertiary facilities were operational the Visions Committee had a leadership role in liaising with the Department of Education and Training and the community to plan for a primary school and education support centre to be re-located to the multi-purpose campus site. Now that these facilities are in the final stages of building two members of the Visions Committee felt that the direction of the vision needed to be reviewed.

MP2 They didn't review it. People...were starting to say we're starting to lose what the vision is really about because we've got this multi-purpose campus. We've got that up and running.

MP7 Everyone is able to say what visions has achieved but it's crying out for rejuvenation and if it doesn't happen now it will die.

Analysis

The learning community model defined by the OECD describes a community that is preparing for the emerging knowledge society by establishing objectives that are set and owned by the community. This section analyses the relevance of the M1 community objectives to an emerging knowledge society and the ownership of the objectives by the community.

The fact that the objectives of the vision statement have sustained a clear direction for education and been supported by all sectors of the community over a 10

year period indicates that they have met an important need in the community. However, this need has largely been directed towards the provision of physical facilities rather than preparing the community for an emerging knowledge society, moreover the community did not use lifelong learning as an organizing principle or social goal.

The OECD description of a learning community approach promotes the use of learning resources of all five sectors and learning technologies as a tool to achieve objectives. In the M1 community the key objective was to create a multi-purpose campus to house learning resources from different sectors. The focus of this objective resulted in new physical resources but not necessarily the effective use of all learning resources in the community as suggested by the OECD model. In fact, if we also consider the three overlapping sites of learning described by Brown (2000), the focus has been largely on one of these sites, formal and informal education and training and one community sector, education. The second OECD objective of using technology to achieve outcomes was an aim shared by the M1 community.

The OECD learning community model description mentions that the community is preparing for an emerging knowledge society and it could be expected that objectives set by a community would reflect this focus. To prepare a community for the knowledge society, Faris' places a very strong emphasis on social and economic outcomes. The Visions Committee objectives make no mention of social outcomes for the community but do include the establishment of economic partnerships with business and industry. While participants in this research did not specifically describe economic partnerships the Visions Committee appears to have adequately supported the M1 community through an economic crisis when a downturn in the timber and horticulture industries created wide scale unemployment in the community. The community used the visions statement to liaise with the government to address the economic and environmental issues through creating the opportunities for economic diversity and environmental sustainability that are necessary in a knowledge society community.

The M1 community leadership group was quite visionary in devising objectives to progress future education in their community and successfully gained community ownership of the objectives. However, the objectives set did not promote lifelong

learning or adequately acknowledge the social outcomes of an emerging knowledge society as described in the OECD learning community approach. Despite this the M1 community did develop clear objectives for an educational vision that has achieved sufficient success to make examination of the factors that enabled the establishment of this vision worthwhile for other communities. The following diagram describes the elements the M1 community used to establish a vision for education.

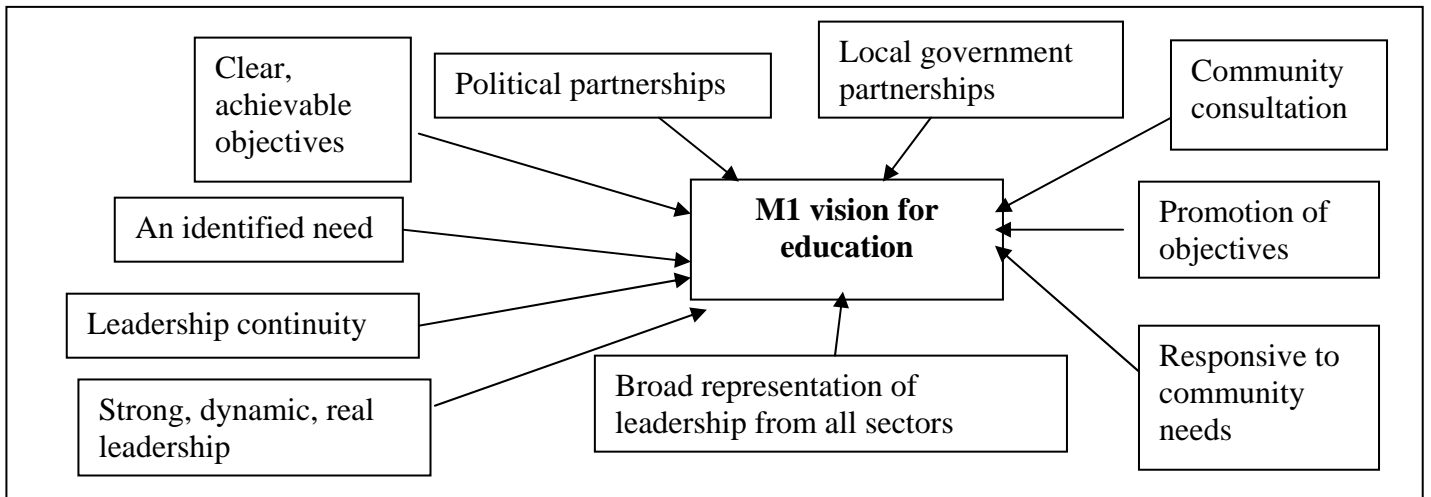


Figure 3: M1 Vision for education

The processes that the M1 community used to establish their vision for education included several significant factors that ensured success of some of the objectives. The first critical element was to establish a clear and achievable need that the community would identify as worthy of support and in the M1 community this was new facilities. The second step was to develop a strong and visionary leadership team with representation from all community sectors that was continuous. Quality leadership that was real and continuous appears to have been an important factor in developing the M1 vision. The third and fourth elements of developing strategic partnerships and extensive community consultation provided a platform for the promotion of the vision objectives. These processes explain how the M1 community has implemented an approach to education that contains some of the aspects of the OECD learning community approach.

Part Two

The next section examines evidence collected for question two and focuses on the specific relationships a primary school develops within the community described in Part One.

To what extent did a learning community approach support an M1 primary school to establish partnerships to address the needs of their community in an emerging knowledge society environment?

As the previous section concludes that the M1 approach contains only some elements of the OECD learning community approach, the second question examines the extent to which these elements support the partnerships established by the primary school and the participation of the community in these partnerships. The needs of community members associated with the M1 primary school are organised according to the outcomes that Faris indicates prepare a community for the knowledge society as described in Chapter Two.

4.4. The Needs of Community Members

4.4.1 Healthy Communities

The health and well-being of school community members was a key issue in the M1 primary school with participants interviewed identifying issues of transience, unemployment, increased mental health and substance abuse issues, social fragmentation and changing values as being of significant importance to families in their school.

- MP6 Families who are very transient, a lot of unemployment etc...
- MP1 Parents who have severe mental health issues and drug taking...
- MP5 I believe there would be quite a few dysfunctional families

The issues identified by participants as affecting families in the M1 school community match the factors of increased mental and emotional stress, social

fragmentation and challenges to traditional values identified in the literature review as factors that will need to be addressed in an emerging knowledge society.

4.4.2 Social inclusion and civic engagement

The M1 community had a small but significant group of transient families who moved between different towns and brought a number of social issues to the community because of the transient nature of their lives. Many of these families were on low incomes, unemployed or had mental health or substance abuse issues and had no family support network within the community which left them quite socially isolated. For these members of the community the development of strategies to engage them in community life and provide greater learning opportunities for children was important.

MP1 A very diverse community with a low socio-economic population and families that are not employed and choose not to work...

MP6 M1 has become the dumping ground for families who are low socio economic, rely on the dole ...

An ethnic minority of indigenous families had also become an issue in the community with strategies needed to engage this group in learning opportunities to foster social and economic development. Racial tension had broken out between two different Aboriginal groups in the community that resulted in an Aboriginal police officer being appointed to the community to support these groups.

MP1 After some significant resettling of Aboriginal people within the town, there was some racial tension between two Aboriginal groups.

MP6 ...and a lot of Aboriginal families have come in.

In the M1 community participants' conversations focused on the needs of the members of the community and several mentioned the difficulty in gaining support for volunteer programs to assist community members.

MP6 Finding it difficult to get volunteers and most of them are elderly people.

MP5 There is a real lack of let's give to M1. Just let's work in M1.

Outcomes to address social inclusion have become an important element in a knowledge society. As research by Faris (2001) and Chapman (1997) explains in the literature review, there is growing evidence that sharp differences between the social and economic situations of individuals affects the health and well-being of community members. Participant comments indicated that these differences were becoming a significant feature of the M1 community with minority groups such as single parents, the unemployed and indigenous families clearly demonstrating that their social and economic situations were impacting on their health and well-being. Faris (2001) believes that a knowledge society environment will need to foster civic engagement in order to encourage community members to care about their community. The M1 community was finding that the ability for members to accept responsibility for a role in the community was lacking.

4.4.3 Economic diversification

In the M1 community the collapse of the timber and fruit industries resulted in significant job losses within the community that forced many people to re-train or develop new businesses and industry. The sudden pressure for new knowledge and skills in order to achieve economic diversification caused considerable social, emotional and financial stress amongst many families in the primary school community.

MP5 It was a big issue and not just for the timber workers.

MP4 When it was happening... emotions ran high, families broke down... It caused huge tension for a whole 12 months...businesses closed, people left town, families were broken up and there was a lot of financial hardship.

This sudden demand for new skills required the government to work closely with the Visions Committee and other sectors of the community to develop effective learning opportunities and systems that would support the increased demand. The increased demands for new knowledge and learning are a feature of an emerging knowledge society.

4.4.4 Environmental sustainability

When the M1 community was forced to cease the logging of old growth forests because it was no longer an environmentally sustainable practice, families who had

depended on the timber industry for several generations became unemployed and the loss of overseas fruit and vegetable markets at the same time exacerbated the situation. These factors combined to create significant social issues in the M1 community with conflict between families who were dependent on the timber industry for their livelihood and families who supported the government decision erupting in the community and spilling into the school playground. Many families suffered financially and emotionally as they sought new ways of supporting their families in a community with limited employment opportunities. Some families were split with one parent going off to drive trucks away from home and those families who stayed home often had to accept a far less well paid or prestigious job. In this situation the pressure on families to make changes to their traditional lifestyle was considerable and resulted in immense pressure on the whole community.

As described by Faris and explained in the literature review, members of the knowledge society are becoming increasingly aware of the finite nature of resources and are endeavouring to establish sustainable relationships with the environment that will maintain a quality of life. In the M1 community the pressure to create these sustainable relationships forced families to make major changes to their traditional lifestyles that had to be supported by partnerships between all community sectors.

Summary

The most significant need of members of the M1 primary school community was for support with the health and social issues that arose from the impact of the collapse of the timber and horticulture industries and the increasing pressures of transience, racial tension, substance abuse, mental health issues and financial stress. Many members of the M1 community sought support for health and social issues from their primary school.

MP3 The school was the anchor for a lot of families.

As a primary school does not provide the adult education and training opportunities that were necessary to address the economic and environmental issues created by the changes to the timber and horticulture industries but does provide support

for the health and social well-being of community members, my investigation focused on the achievement of health and social outcomes.

The next section will examine the partnerships, and the extent to which the community participated in these partnerships, that the primary school developed to address the factors described above and improve outcomes for members of the community.

4.5 Partnerships and Participation

A learning community approach, as described in the OECD model, uses lifelong learning as an organising principle or social goal and mobilizes the learning resources or knowledge and skills of all five community sectors in order to achieve agreed objectives. As discussed when examining question one, the M1 community did not use lifelong learning as a social goal or organising principle and their main objective was to establish education facilities not promote the outcomes that Faris describes as being necessary for a community that is moving into a knowledge society environment. Therefore, description of the partnerships the M1 primary school established with community sectors will demonstrate the extent that primary schools address the needs of their community in an emerging knowledge society.

Partnerships that the M1 school community established with other sectors of the community were largely established in response to a specific need and there were a number of effective partnerships established to improve health outcomes and the social inclusion of members of the community. These partnerships were driven by the impact of social and health issues on student behaviour and learning within the school.

The most effective of these for the M1 school community was a partnership initiated by the Visions Committee between representatives from the public, education, economic and civic sectors to support the health of community members during the timber industry collapse. The aim of the Health Committee was to get all organisations together to arrange a coordinated approach to the social, emotional and economic issues

that were surfacing in the community during the restructuring of the timber industry. This committee ensured that there was a lot of sharing of information between the sectors regarding what support community members needed.

MP1 Getting all groups together to get an organized approach to this issue.

Through the Health Committee, members of the education sector initiated a program called Strong Families. Strong Families was designed to ensure a coordinated approach to interagency support for families with multiple needs. These needs may be social, emotional, health or financial. A group leader would instigate a meeting that brought together all the stakeholders from community sectors who were involved with a family. At this meeting the family would discuss their issues and the support that they had been receiving and the agencies would describe their role. This process empowered the family as it gave them some control over what support they needed and ensured they knew exactly what each agency was doing. It provided a cohesive approach to dealing with the family's issues that meant community resources were used more effectively and strategically.

MP1 From there, a plan of action is devised... with one agency being the lead agency they coordinate the other agencies to ensure that what they have said will be done is done and organize a follow up meeting within a certain time frame.

Although qualitative data on community participation in these health partnerships was not collected, examination of the nature of the partnerships indicates that participation is dependent on need and the need may fluctuate. However, as this partnership had existed for several years, it suggests that the strategies were successful in promoting improved health outcomes for community members.

Safe Houses also evolved from the Health Committee and was a safety program for students walking home from school. It relied on the support of volunteers in the community to provide a safe house for students who may feel threatened or be hurt when walking around the town. This program brought together members from the education and voluntary sectors.

The partnerships of the Health Committee, Strong Families and Safe Houses provided a clear, cohesive and organized approach to ensuring the mobilization of resources from all sectors to support families. These partnerships enabled the M1 primary school to develop sustainable practices to promote the health development of their community members. Data collected suggests that because of the impact on their students, the school or education sector took responsibility for developing partnerships with community sectors to support the health and well-being of their community members.

MP1 It is a community working together on health and justice.

To reduce the social isolation of community members the M1 primary school provided opportunities to establish formal and informal partnerships with parents.

- Programs like the Triple P Parenting Program run in partnership with Community Health to develop parents' skills and knowledge in parenting and in supporting their children's learning.
- The Support a Reader Program where the school offered sessions to inform and train parents in supporting their own children's reading and writing.

MP6 ...we often have parents coming to the support a reader tutoring or support a writer.

However, participation in the on-going voluntary support for student reading in the school was not very successful at all.

MP6 Really very hard to get people to come in.

The school tried to provide social events for parents and students such as Mothers' and Fathers' Days, Gala days, a wine and cheese night and informal pre-assembly meetings between the principal and parents. The special events, such as Fathers' Day and Mothers' Day, that the school community had run have been well attended with a wide range of community members including grandparents being involved.

MP5 ...Both were very successful....Grandads came.

These activities were designed to showcase student learning, inform parents of teaching and learning in the school and build social relationships between the school and parents. The development of partnerships with parents enabled teachers to support the health and well-being of families, promote social inclusion and use learning as a social activity. All participants felt that this partnership was an extremely important aspect of the school community.

MP6 I think parent education has come a huge way. Most of the teachers are really involved with parents in their classrooms....

MP5 Certainly that we are a school community means we develop relationships.

Some participants also felt that the school community partnerships developed with parents have been successful with a high level of participation by parents.

MP6 We probably see all our parents, even of the kids at risk.

To meet the social and economic needs of Aboriginal students the school established partnerships with groups from the public sector of the community including health and justice. A police officer with expertise in Aboriginal affairs had come into the community to support aboriginal community members in resolving the conflicts between the two groups in the town. This officer now worked closely with the Aboriginal education officer who was a member of the school community to support Aboriginal students.

MP1 A police officer is now in the town to deal with Aboriginal issues.

There were two programs within the school that promoted partnerships between members of the voluntary sector of the community and education. Each of these programs aimed to reduce the inequities between students and provide greater opportunities for lower socio-economic students. One was the School Volunteer Program and another was the Support a Reader Program where volunteers listened to students reading. Each of these programs was struggling to maintain the number of volunteers required to run effectively.

MP6 Finding it very difficult to get volunteers and most of them are elderly.
...With our clientele a lot of parents work.

MP5 ...when the volunteer just doesn't turn up what can you do?

This would seem to suggest that there was not a strong commitment in the M1 school community to civic engagement. This was supported by one participant who said

MP5 M1 hasn't got much community spirit....

Primary school partnerships with the economic sector of the community were largely arranged by individual teachers with some local businesses providing resources on request and teachers using their knowledge of the community to individually access the expertise of business community members. However, each year the primary school staff and students participated in supporting two major community events that promoted economic diversification in the town; the Cherry Festival and the Horticulture Show. This support took the form of providing displays of student work and activities, encouraging students to enter competitions and being involved in organizing events on the day.

MP4 We try to participate in local shows, the Cherry Festival and contribute to that...

The promotion of environmental outcomes at the primary school was again fostered by individual teachers with an interest in this area. However, a district environmental program that monitored the quality of water in local waterways had resulted in an ongoing partnership between one teacher and his class in the school, the Ribbons of Blue coordinator and Conservation and Land Management personnel.

MP5 ...my special project is working with the Ribbons of Blue coordinator.
He comes in regularly and we do all these great projects.

While for environmental and science related activities many teachers used an environmental centre and Conservation and Land Management nursery as a resource for their classes.

MP4 Lot of the staff use the [environment] centre and CALM nursery.

Analysis

The M1 primary school had developed several successful partnerships with other sectors of the community in response to issues regarding health and well-being. The partnerships developed to address these needs were clearly defined, purposeful, had strong leadership and participation levels indicate that they were successful. However the partnerships were largely reactive, as with the Aboriginal community issues, rather than proactive in building organised and sustainable community partnerships to promote the health of community members. The approach was based on a deficit model that identified immediate needs and targeted community issues rather than developing a learning community approach that supported members in accessing lifelong learning opportunities that would contribute to the social and health development and transformation of all members of the community.

The M1 primary school had well-established school based partnerships and procedures in place to involve members of their school community in their journey to develop the social outcomes of a learning community and a high level of participation in these activities. These processes focused on involving and listening to school community members in a social context and engaging them informally in social activities that would enhance their skills in Delors' pillars of *learning to live together* and *learning to be*. There were also strong partnerships that focused on reducing the social isolation of families by establishing informal and formal relationships between educators and community members that promoted the social goals of learning. These partnerships were promoted by most school community members and appeared to have been the result of a leadership vision. However, despite the value placed on these social activities, participants did not have a clear understanding that these partnerships would promote the development of outcomes to improve social inclusion for community members and there was no evidence to support explicit planning to achieve this outcome.

While several participants mentioned that there was a lack of community spirit and pride in the school and the community, there was no evidence to indicate that partnerships had been established to foster civic engagement and as a result citizenship and community responsibility seemed to be lacking.

Partnerships to promote economic and environmental outcomes were evident in the M1 school community but possibly because the context was a primary school with young students there were no partnerships established with other community sectors to address the issues and there were no coordinated approaches to improving outcomes. However, there were partnerships to promote environmental outcomes that were established by individual members although there was no whole school community approach unlike the whole school involvement in community events that promoted economic diversity in the town.

The strategic links that the M1 primary school had established with the M1 learning community vision of creating a multi-purpose campus promoted the integration of their school into the multi-purpose campus. There was a focus on achieving effective partnerships with the other educational organisations on the multi-purpose site. These partnerships had established common principles between the educational members but there was no evidence to suggest that the principles promoted the use of lifelong learning as an organizing principle or social goal. The emphasis appears to have been placed upon the first two of Delors' pillars of learning; *learning to do* and *learning to know* in order to develop the knowledge, skills and understandings of community members. This approach appears to have placed little emphasis on the social aspects of learning in the community such as *learning to be* and *learning to live together*. Without a balanced approach that includes all four of Delors' pillars of learning it is difficult to achieve outcomes that prepare a community for the knowledge society and health and social inclusion continued to be key issues for the M1 primary school community.

Finally, the extent to which the M1 primary school successfully used a learning community approach to develop partnerships to address the needs of the community in an emerging knowledge society was limited to engaging the public sector in health development and social inclusion outcomes and engaging some voluntary community members in partnerships to foster these outcomes.

CHAPTER 5

Case Study Two-K1

The purpose of this chapter is to present the evidence collected on the community researched in Case Study Two. This community will hereafter be referred to as K1. As in Case Study One an analysis of the data obtained is made in relation to research question one and two:

1. *How is a learning community approach established in the K1 community?*
2. *To what extent does a learning community approach support a K1 primary school to establish partnerships to address the needs of its community in an emerging knowledge society environment?*

The approach to establishing a learning community is described from an educational point of view as data was collected from education organizations including two school communities and an Adult Learning Centre (see Fig:1). Data is examined in the same sequence as for the M1 community in the previous chapter. There were 9 participants in the study who will be identified as KP1-KP9.

Part One

5.1 Context

K1 is a rural community located north of Melbourne in the heart of irrigation country in Victoria. The town has approximately the same size of population as the M1 community but is located only 20km from a larger centre. K1 has been largely an agricultural community combined with associated industries that process the foods produced. Agriculture and industry in the area have traditionally been dependent on an extensive irrigation system that has supported dairy farming and the fruit industry. Dry land cropping, sheep and cattle have also been valued farming industries. An extended period of drought, some 6 years without substantial rain, had seriously affected agriculture with many farmers having to sell off sheep or cattle stock because they

lacked the water and pasture to support them. This meant that agriculture and the related industries were facing an uncertain economic future.

The K1 community was composed of predominantly European Australian descendents although there was a long term Italian group in the area and other minority cultures included indigenous Australians, Tongan and Filipinos. The economic status of community members was diverse, ranging from those who were very wealthy to those who existed day to day at a survival level. The clientele coming into the community included retirees seeking a country lifestyle and some families of a low socio-economic nature who were there because housing was cheaper than in the city. Many of these families were single parent families with social problems. There was also a small group of third and fourth generation welfare recipients living within the town.

The community supported two primary schools of a similar size, a senior high school and a Catholic school that caters for students from K-10. Students from nearby towns were bussed in to the senior high school. A Community Learning Centre offered adult learning opportunities and had strong partnerships with business and industry to support training schemes. The centre also offered an alternative education for alienated youth.

In 1999 the Victorian government developed the Learning Towns Network Program as part of the Pathways and Standards Policy and sought submissions from Victorian towns. The K1 community was successful in joining the program. The program had as its goal to foster lifelong learning and develop collaborative partnerships between education, industry, local government and community that integrate economic and social development. This chapter examines how the K1 community worked towards achieving this goal.

The following timeline outlines the key events that occurred during this journey.

**Table 7:
A Timeline of Relevant Events in the K1 Community**

Year	Action
1999	Learning Towns Network Program outlined in government policy. First year of drought
2000	Learning Towns Network Program established in K1 Coordinator appointed Drought continues
2001	September-Learning Towns Network Program Evaluation Drought continues
2002	K1 Community Learning Centre built Drought continues
2003	Drought continues
2004	State and Federal Government policy papers on irrigation and river systems Drought continues
2005	Funding being phased out in 2006. Successful submission for funding to continue with a slightly different emphasis through a new government source. Consultation phase for multi-campus site.

The Learning Towns Program clearly promoted lifelong learning as an organising principle for the towns involved in the program and lifelong learning was certainly a key feature of education in the K1 community. The following statement is taken from the program guidelines for the Learning Towns Network.

Fostering and supporting lifelong learning, and contributing to the development of a learning culture, are key purposes of the Learning Towns network. (Adult, Community and Further Education Board, 2000, p.3)

To successfully become members of this network, the K1 community needed to be committed to supporting lifelong learning and explain how they would go about fostering it in their community. The next section examines data collected from members of the education sector of the K1 community on the promotion of lifelong learning and agreed objectives in the community.

5.2 Lifelong Learning

The OECD learning community model has lifelong learning as an organizing principle and social goal and the Learning Towns Program followed this model by using lifelong learning to promote social regeneration. It is described as one of their objectives

Develop community wide coalitions which bring together relevant partners from the public and private sectors with the common goals of supporting lifelong learning, and promoting social and economic regeneration. (Sheed & Bottrell, 2001, p.13)

and an outcome

Enhanced understanding of the value of lifelong learning and increased community commitment to ensuring learning opportunities and outcomes continue to expand. (Sheed & Bottrell, 2001, p.15)

To participate in the Learning Towns Project, the K1 community was required to set up an advisory board composed of voluntary representatives from a range of community sectors. Funding from the government provided a full time coordinator. The Learning Towns Board was responsible for liaising with the coordinator to implement the objectives of the Learning Towns Program and develop a community understanding of lifelong learning. Members of the Board spent some time working together to develop a common understanding of lifelong learning before devising a series of promotional activities that would promote an understanding within the community.

KP7 ...we were talking about really keeping the brain active and staying involved in things and sharing your knowledge. That was the other thing we wanted people to understand, that you may think you can't teach anyone anything but everyone can teach someone something because we've all got our strengths.

To promote an understanding of lifelong learning in the community, the Board and the coordinator invited experts to come in and talk to community members and encouraged Board members who represented very different sectors of the community to initiate and lead discussion in their sectors. The Board also conducted media campaigns with bumper stickers that said 'What did you learn today?' and featured a 'Learner of the Month' in the local newspaper. They ensured that the featured learner came from a wide range of learning settings rather than just the traditional university student learner and the learner of the month was then provided with a voucher for free access to learning opportunities at the Community Learning Centre.

KP7 ...learners from different workplaces and from the schools...we focused on not the ones going to uni but on the ones who were actually... working in the community and living in the community.

These activities promoted lifelong learning as being a birth to death concept that included all of Delors' four pillars of learning and Brown's overlapping sites.

KP7 What we wanted to do was have learning from the beginning of life to the end of life and get people to have the idea that you never stop learning.

The activities planned to promote lifelong learning actively sought to engage the community in exploring the concept so when developing a media approach to promoting the town as a Learning Town the Board ran a competition that encouraged students and community members to work in groups to devise an advertisement. The competition had many members talking, sharing and communicating their ideas so that it became quite a social event.

KP7 I guess it was a learning experience but it was also a social activity... A lot of promotion of those sort of ideas within the community.

The Board's promotion of a common understanding of lifelong learning was very successful as each member interviewed from the education sector of the community defined lifelong learning in similar terms to the understanding developed by the Learning Towns Board.

KP6 Know what you want to know, where to find it, have the tools to use it and know how to find it.

KP8 ... never stop learning. There are always things you can do to improve.

Each of these understandings of lifelong learning has very strong connections to the explanation provided by the Board member and the OECD definition of '...an ideal whereby conscious learning continues as a matter of course throughout peoples' lives...' (OECD, 1993, p.13). Despite the similarity between these definitions of lifelong learning, the deputy principal explained that their school was planning to revisit understandings of lifelong learning with the school staff in the near future.

Participants applied this common understanding of lifelong learning consciously, and sometimes unconsciously, to activities within their community so that when explaining an activity or project, participants described it in terms of lifelong learning. For example, the deputy principal described their curriculum focus as

KP6 Lifelong learning and thinking drive curriculum.

The focus on lifelong learning in school communities had been established as a direct result of community involvement in the Learning Towns Program with a principal indicating that each school community within the town had explicitly described lifelong learning in their School Charter.

KP5 The School Charters of each school have a focus on lifelong learning.

This principal suggested that the wider community and parents may not make the connections between the lifelong learning principles of school based projects and the Learning Towns project. However, from an informal conversation with a volunteer working in his school, it was apparent that while community members may not see the explicit links to the Learning Towns Program they do have an understanding of lifelong learning because the volunteer clearly saw herself, a retiree, as a learner who could learn from others as much as she was able to share her knowledge. Therefore, although the connections to the Learning Towns Program may not be obvious to all members of the community the promotion of a common understanding, was very successful within the education and voluntary sectors of the community. The success in establishing this understanding had, in part, been due to the fact that the Board used lifelong learning as an organising principle and social goal as outlined in the OECD learning community model.

Promotion of a concept of lifelong learning that included all four of Delors' pillars of learning had resulted in an alienated youth program giving equal time and weight in the timetable to each of the pillars of *learning to know*, *learning to do*, *learning to be* and *learning to live together*. The acknowledgement of Delors' third and fourth pillars in the alienated youth program seems to have been particularly effective in providing opportunities for intergenerational learning that had built relationships between youth and the elderly and given the elderly a sense of self-worth and self-esteem and youth a strong respect for other community members.

KP4 Volunteers regard it as rewarding and providing an insight into the young people of today.

This focus on all four pillars of learning was also promoted by two administrative leaders interviewed who specifically included the development of skills, knowledge, relationships and personal development as aspects of lifelong learning that were promoted in their school community. In their school, partnerships were established with parents and community members to promote all aspects of lifelong learning. They described these partnerships in terms of the learning benefits for students and the community members involved so that learning opportunities were viewed as being of mutual benefit. Lifelong learning for this school community was facilitated through partnerships with the wider community that created social opportunities for learning. For example the school, in partnership with Relationships Australia, facilitated a 'Dad's do make a Difference' program that was launched with a family pizza night attended by over 400 people. While the main beneficiary of the program was the father who was involved, the family pizza night turned it into a significant social gathering for all families. The social event was followed by learning opportunities about parenting for fathers. Several participants talked about the benefits that the program had had for all members of the family.

KP5 It was a community based program called 'Dads do make a Difference' that was trying to get Dads more involved in education and help them have better relationships with their children.

KP9 We had fathers and children's get together with 400 people the first night and 40 dads for the next 3 sessions where they talked about building relationships with children.

The organising principle of using social goals to achieve learning outcomes was evident in the approach to implementation of this project.

As lifelong learning in the K1 community was used as a key principle for the organization of partnerships and activities in the community, learning was seen as being an integral part of the community and workplace rather than being confined to educational institutions during the formal years of education. The broadening of learning to include and value the overlapping sites of the workplace, informal learning

and the community as discussed by Brown seemed to give the community a greater understanding of lifelong learning.

Analysis

The Learning Towns Program clearly focused on lifelong learning as an organizing principle and social goal as defined in the OECD learning community model described by Faris. Lifelong learning was a specific objective of the program ‘...common goal[s] of supporting lifelong learning...’ (Sheed and Bottrell, 2001, p.13) and activities to promote implementation focused on developing an understanding of lifelong learning through learner engagement. The success of the activities was demonstrated in the previous section by the similar understandings of lifelong learning that were expressed by participants and the participation levels of community members.

The common understandings of lifelong learning established in the K1 community match the OECD definition that was explored in the literature review. This definition of ‘...conscious learning that continues throughout people’s lives...’ (OECD, 2001, p.8) was expressed in similar words by several of the participants in the K1 community and certainly the cradle to grave concept expressed by Longworth was a key understanding that the K1 Board tried to develop with the community.

If we consider Delors’ four pillars of lifelong learning and Brown’s overlapping sites of learning as aspects of lifelong learning, then these were an additional focus for the K1 community. Leaders of the project provided several examples that demonstrated that learning was viewed as not only from the *learning to know* and *learning to do* pillars but included *learning to be* and *learning to live together*. Intergenerational mentoring and partnerships were key strategies in the community that supported these pillars of learning. Examples of learning that was occurring in all three of Brown’s sites was also demonstrated throughout the research with community activities to promote learning a focus.

The OECD view of lifelong learning as a social goal was a particular feature of the K1 community where the social aspect of community activities and events was

important when promoting learning activities. For example, the researcher attended a social function to celebrate the first year of a mentoring program for students called Old Mates. This function was attended by politicians, educators, volunteers, business and local government representatives. Using a significant social occasion to celebrate the program ensured continuing community support, promoted the program and gave community members pride in their role in the community.

In conclusion, the K1 community focus on lifelong learning as an objective and an outcome seems to have created a common understanding of the concept that has been developed further through using lifelong learning as an organizing principle and social goal as suggested in the OECD learning community model.

The second aspect of the OECD learning community model that was examined in the K1 community was the establishment of agreed objectives and these are outlined in the next section.

5.3 Objectives

The objectives developed by the K1 community are examined to determine what they are, how they were developed and why they were developed.

5.3.1 What are the key objectives?

When the K1 community submitted an expression of interest to join the Learning Towns Program they were agreeing to use the key objectives and principles of the Learning Towns Project to promote lifelong learning in their community. The objectives, principles and guidelines of the project had been devised by the state government and were based on the OECD Learning Community model and DfEE's toolkit. As such the objectives came from over 10 years of research by UNESCO and the OECD into future education for an emerging knowledge society. The strong research background of these objectives provided the K1 community with a

comprehensive and visionary outline for future learning. All nine towns who participated in the project used the same objectives.

The key objectives of the Learning Towns program were to:

- develop community-wide coalitions which bring together relevant partners from the public and private sectors with the common goals of supporting lifelong learning, and promoting social and economic regeneration;
- promote and support the value of learning, and play an active role in encouraging individuals, employers and a range of organisations to involve themselves in learning throughout their lives;
- create and maintain strategic linkages between Adult Community Education organisations, education and training providers, local government and industry, and use those linkages to create cross-sectoral educational opportunities for students in rural and regional areas;
- improve access to good quality education, training and learning opportunities through those sectoral linkages;
- enhance the portability of learning and knowledge and facilitate learner transition from one sector to another;
- provide learners in rural and regional areas with broad education, training and employment options and support achieving those options through a network of linked education and training providers;
- engage industry as a partner in education and training in ways which facilitate employment options which benefit both employers and job-seekers;
- reinforce the role of local government as a supporter of local communities and encourage local council involvement in community-based education and training innovation; and
- improve the coordination and integration of educational, social and economic planning in rural and regional areas (Sheed & Bottrell, 2001, p.13).

Although these objectives formed the basis for the project in each town each community added their own interpretation to these objectives.

The nine Learning Towns initiatives...have developed in quite different ways depending on the local context... (Sheed & Bottrell, 2001, p.54)

The key focus of the objectives of the Learning Towns Program for the K1 community was to create '*community-wide coalitions*' to support lifelong learning. Examination of several of the objectives provides evidence of this focus. For example:

The objective to '*promote and support the value of learning...*' clearly focuses on lifelong learning and developing a community understanding of lifelong learning that encourages community members from all sectors to value learning in all its aspects, in a range of sites and as a birth to death activity. The K1 community approach to this objective was described in the previous section.

The objectives of '*create and maintain strategic linkages...*' and '*develop community-wide coalitions...*' encourage sectors of the community to focus on increasing lifelong learning opportunities that promote the achievement of economic or social goals for themselves and the community. Evidence describing the K1 community approach to developing community partnerships to promote lifelong learning was explored in the previous section and will be further examined in Part Two of this chapter.

While the context and community interpretation influenced what the objectives mean for the K1 community, La Trobe researchers indicate that the interpretation of lifelong learning can influence the types of activities undertaken by the community.

...there is some ambiguity... attached to the idea of lifelong learning....The dominant meaning of lifelong learning can have marked effects on the type of activities being focused on in the Program. (Sheed & Bottrell, 2001, p.59)

This ambiguity can affect implementation of the objectives. As explored previously the K1 community created a range of activities that seem to have effectively enhanced

understandings of lifelong learning and participant feedback revealed a common community understanding that matches that of researchers such as the OECD and Delors. However, other towns involved in the Program may have used different activities and developed a slightly different understanding.

While school communities did not explicitly have all the Learning Towns objectives as part of their School Charter, they did form an overarching guide for the development of objectives that were unique to each school community. The valuing of lifelong learning and promotion of community partnerships formed an integral part of their mission statements as indicated earlier by the primary school principal. For example the secondary college mission statement included the following:

- Fosters the partnership between students, parents, the entire staff and the wider community.
- Making the most of their opportunities to learn in an innovative, challenging and inspiring education environment.
- Take up the challenges that meet them, and dare to dream! (Secondary College Charter, 2004, p.2)

There were strong connections between Learning Towns objectives and those of each school community within the town that seem to have created the ‘coalitions’ described earlier. There were also several partnerships established between school communities that maintained an ongoing shared understanding of the Learning Towns objectives in the community. For example:

- Each school contributed articles regularly to the local newspaper in a coordinated and structured approach. Articles from each school were organized in a cycle that described school events and provided educative or informative articles on current education issues.
- There was one joint School Council meeting per term where school community leaders came together to discuss learning in their environment and at a whole community level.
- A professional learning partnership between government and non-government schools brought teachers of students in the middle years

together in a three year project to develop common understandings regarding pedagogy and curriculum.

The high level of consultation and development of common understandings promoted by Board members regarding the objectives meant that individual school communities had a strong commitment to establishing connections between the objectives of their school community and the Learning Towns Project. There seems to have been a strong commitment from Board members who were school leaders to integrate the Learning Towns objectives into their individual school communities. However, not all school community leaders were interviewed and there may have been different levels of engagement from leaders.

Participants interviewed particularly valued three key concepts from the Learning Towns Objectives. They were partnerships that provide both parties with a win-win situation, mentoring and the promotion of lifelong learning.

KP1 So we explain all the things in the community that are given to the youth, so we say how about giving back a small service to the community in return.

These concepts link directly to the Learning Towns objectives of ‘...develop community-wide coalitions...’ and ‘...promote and support the value of learning...’.

In this manner school community leaders used the common overarching objectives of the Learning Towns Project to provide objectives for their school communities.

KP7 ...it [Learning Towns] became a kind of umbrella for learning

In providing an ‘umbrella for learning’ in the town, the Learning Towns Program established a framework with clear objectives that promoted the development of a learning community. Clustering of the nine objectives of the Learning Towns Project reveals a focus on lifelong learning and creating connections between sectors of the community to ‘mobilize learning resources’. These two aspects are critical elements of the OECD definition for a learning community and were key objectives of the K1 learning community model.

In the K1 community the objectives were already set by the program but community agreement and understanding of the objectives was necessary to achieve ownership. The next section examines how this ownership was achieved.

5.3.2 How was ownership of the objectives developed?

The key issue when commencing the project was to develop a strategic plan to implement the objectives that was owned by the community and involved key stakeholders. To achieve an understanding and ownership of the strategic plan, the program coordinator visited every major stakeholder and community leader personally to discuss the importance of their involvement in the process. A dinner and drinks event with a high profile expert speaker who would promote Learning Communities was organised and from this meeting an Advisory Board that met the Learning Towns guidelines and had representatives of all major sectors of the community was formed.

KP7 ...there were strict guidelines and you had to have a Board that had a representative from every trade, unions, hospitals, schools but it couldn't be dominated by education.

Leadership of the Learning Towns Program came from the Advisory Board members and the Learning Towns coordinator. The Board members of the Learning Towns Project were representative of a broad range of sectors in the community with educators not being allowed to have a dominant role. Each of these Board members was a strong leader in their own area of influence with some being acknowledged as quite visionary.

KP4 ... [leaders] who are able to get people on board and are looking forward and you've got that visionary.

Participants also indicated that the appointment of a strong and dynamic coordinator to lead the project was seen to be a very strategic and successful move.

KP7 If you said has Learning Towns been successful... [it] is successful because you've got a dynamic coordinator...

The second step in addressing the Learning Towns Project objectives was promotion of the objectives. When Advisory Board members had developed a common

understanding of the Learning Towns objectives and guidelines, their focus turned to promoting the program in the community. All Board members were used in public promotions in order to share the work load and provide a broad and credible base in the community. The coordinator and Board members organized activities to engage the community in developing an understanding of lifelong learning. One activity was the 'What's so special about K1?' competition mentioned earlier that encouraged students and adults in the community to promote positives about their community.

KP7 And we got a terrific response to that... there's a video that's still used as a kind of promotional.

As Sheed and Bottrell explain, 'It [lifelong learning] is a very abstract concept and one that has been difficult to communicate' (Sheed & Bottrell, 2001, p.35). By actively involving the K1 community in lifelong learning opportunities, the Board modelled the principles and provided opportunities for community members to achieve a deep understanding and ownership of all the Learning Towns objectives including lifelong learning.

In the initial phases of the project extensive research into the learning needs of community members and their learning background was conducted. The data collected was analysed and used to plan the learning programs and partnerships offered by the Community Learning Centre.

KP7 ...we knew that people were actually coming from a fairly wide area to learn. ...it was a real centre of learning in that sense and the town then became a real focus because people were prepared to travel... to do that course... So that was one thing we tried to find out.

The next step was to build upon the network of community, business and professional partnerships that already existed in the community under the one umbrella of lifelong learning. A number of specific projects facilitated some of these partnerships. There was the establishment of the K1 Youth Advisory Board that focused on involving youth in initiating events and improving facilities for youth in the town and a community Job Skills program that trained people returning to the workforce.

P7 ... return to work training programs for people in the community. They were quite successful...

Consultative processes initiated by local government already existed within the community to facilitate community understanding and ownership of the Learning Towns objectives and initiatives. For example, the shire annually facilitated an open community meeting to consult with members and discuss issues, concerns and a direction for future planning. From this consultation process, issues were identified and strategic plans devised and driven by a voluntary chairperson and committee with the shire providing funding for the plans. This process ensured that people felt listened to, had the opportunity to become involved and could see outcomes for the strategic plans. It also ensured community consultation and ownership of the Learning Towns Project objectives as these became the overarching goals for the community with a focus on learning filtering into the objectives of other organizations and community groups.

KP2 The shire has developed an excellent community forum process. People in K1 feel they are listened to and can see outcomes.

Consolidation of this partnership between local government and other community sectors was an objective of the Learning Towns program;

... reinforce the role of local government as a supporter of local communities and encourage local council involvement in community-based education and training innovation' (Sheed & Bottrell, 2001, p.13).

Participant responses to shire involvement indicate that the consultative community processes developed by local government were valued and demonstrated support for the community.

KP4 This is a shire that is prepared to back the [community] action plans with funding.

The establishment of processes to meet the objective of local government links with the community and education sectors also connects to the OECD learning community definition that encourages the mobilization of learning resources of all sectors including the specific sectors outlined here of civic and education. This aspect of the K1 community also reflects the second strand of development, participation, from the DfEE toolkit. This strand of development focuses on learning to involve the public in the policy process of building a learning culture within a town or shire. The

consultative processes initiated by the K1 local government clearly gave community members the opportunity to be actively engaged in planning and implementing policy.

The Learning Towns objectives were well resourced with substantial shire funding for local initiatives and government funding providing a full time coordinator and a contingency budget. As the community was one of nine towns involved in the program, the government also supported communities with specialist expertise in the form of advisors and coordinated network meetings to share ideas, strategies and maintain an understanding of the direction of the project. From the organised networking meetings, the K1 coordinator used technology to establish relationships with state, national and international leaders of similar projects and used these networks to enhance implementation of the Learning Towns Program in the K1 community. Networks established included: Victorian Learning Towns Network and the Australian Learning Communities Network (McCullough, 2003. p 2).

As a government funded program, there was a high level of accountability for financial management and outcomes achieved. The K1 community was required to participate in a government funded evaluation of the program conducted by La Trobe University researchers in 2001. The coordinator was also required to set up monitoring processes during implementation although finding the most appropriate assessment tools was not an easy task as he and La Trobe researchers stated.

There is a debate at the moment on how to measure success of a Learning Community. Is it the number of identifiable learners engaged in formal learning, the bums on seats approach, the walk through the door approach or should it be in getting a handle on the usually intangible positive community spirit that should be developing thereby having greater levels of community engagement in all its forms? (McCullough, 2003, p.3)

There is no doubt that the Learning Towns Network Program is having an impact but there are no systematic processes in place to measure this impact. (Sheed & Bottrell, 2001, p.62)

Although these comments indicate that there were difficulties in setting up appropriate strategies to monitor and evaluate the program, accountability for achieving

outcomes was an important aspect of the project and, despite the difficulties, there was a clear commitment from the community to on-going monitoring and review processes that had been stimulated by government, local government processes and the limited tenure of the program.

Coordinators of the project were very conscious of the timelines set for involvement in the project and had planned to ensure the sustainability of the objectives. Community leaders had recently reviewed the program and refocused the outcomes in order to engage in a new project that maintained lifelong learning as a core understanding but had a renewed focus on establishing community partnerships.

KP2 The Link Committee has amalgamated with the Learning Towns Project.

Membership of a government funded project provided the K1 community with the human and financial resource support necessary to adjust research based objectives to their community needs for social and economic regeneration. The next section describes why the objectives were developed by the Victorian government and accepted by the K1 community as an approach to improve community outcomes.

5.3.3 Why were the objectives developed?

The Learning Towns objectives were developed by the Victorian government and the program was outlined as a key strategy in the Pathways and Standards Policy (1999). The program was developed to allow rural and regional communities to build learning options that would improve employment opportunities and thus improve social and economic development in the community.

The Learning Towns Project focuses on community building through the coordination and integration of educational, social and economic planning in rural and regional areas. (Sheed & Bottrell, 2001, p.12)

The involvement of the K1 community in the project was due to a group of dynamic community and education leaders who worked together to develop the main themes of education and the community that needed improvement. This group of leaders was seen to be quite visionary and exceptional in their leadership skills.

Several participants also noted that the community was very proactive in looking out for things, especially funding, that would support the improvements identified.

KP2 This is a politically active community who believe anything is possible.

KP4 There are people here with unique leadership styles but they're out there looking for things all the time.

KP5 This is an optimistic community who are proactive in making changes.

The Learning Towns objectives fitted the future direction envisioned by the community at the time and were supported by the K1 community as a means of enhancing what was already happening in the community. The next section analyses the connections between the K1 interpretation of the Learning Towns objectives and the OECD model of a learning community.

Analysis

The objectives for the K1 learning community model came from an extensive research base that gave the objectives a high degree of credibility and the capacity to promote future growth of the community rather than just address immediate needs. Participation in a state wide project that had international links provided the K1 community with explicit guidelines and resources to implement the objectives within the community. The global connections to other learning communities and the research base of the objectives ensured that strategies to support the community in a knowledge society environment were developed not only in response to issues but often before issues or concerns emerged. There was a feeling from several participants that the proactive research based approach of the Learning Towns Project supported the existing style of how the community operated rather than directed or changed it.

KP4 ... we've got the culture of doing things with a lot of planning and forethought not just going that would be a good idea let's grab some money and go with it.

This comment would indicate that K1 community members felt that the objectives of the Learning Towns Program, although generic to the project, were applicable to the needs of their community. In fact, during the five year period that the K1 community

was involved in the Learning Towns Program the objectives did appear to support the community through the social and economic effects of a long term drought.

The research upon which the project was based included examination of international trends, futures scenarios and the OECD model of a learning community approach. Many features of the OECD definition were embedded in the objectives. The OECD model promotes the use of learning resources from all five sectors of the community and learning technologies as a tool to achieve objectives. In the K1 community objectives clearly promoted partnerships between all community sectors to support lifelong learning in the community and the community demonstrated a commitment to implementing this objective with a focus on partnerships between community sectors that was evident in all discussions with K1 community members. Evidence from participants indicates that balanced leadership from all five sectors was of benefit in promoting and gaining support for Learning Towns objectives as it provided credibility with all community members. Learning technologies was a less promoted tool used by the K1 community to achieve objectives although one coordinator noted the benefits of technology in establishing support networks with other learning communities.

The Learning Town Program has significantly assisted in the development of networks amongst professional and community groups.
(McCullough, 2003 p.2)

The OECD learning community definition says that a community will have set and agreed objectives within the context of a community that is preparing for an emerging knowledge society. The research base of the K1 learning community approach incorporated background knowledge of an emerging knowledge society environment that ensured the objectives would prepare the community for the knowledge society. This is evident in the focus on lifelong learning throughout the community, objectives to promote social inclusion amongst minority groups and the responsibility for being a caring community member that is necessary for civic engagement. The community did use the Learning Towns objectives to develop strategies to support the health, social and economic issues that were created by long term drought and investigations into the environmental sustainability of agricultural practices. These aspects are discussed later in this chapter.

Several participants suggested that the K1 community was the sort of community that was prepared to embrace change and that the learning community approach had been a tool to support the direction the community was going rather than provide that direction.

KP7 ... it probably complemented it rather than changed it because we've always been a town that is fairly keen on looking towards where the next opportunity is and fighting for it.

Investigation of the elements of lifelong learning and the agreed objectives in the K1 approach to a learning community demonstrate strong connections between the K1 approach and the OECD learning community model. Technology appeared to be the only element that could have had a stronger emphasis in order to match the OECD model. As the learning community approach used by the K1 community has been successful in supporting this community to prepare for a knowledge society environment, examination of the factors that enabled the establishment of this model may be useful for other communities. The following diagram describes how the K1 community established a learning community.

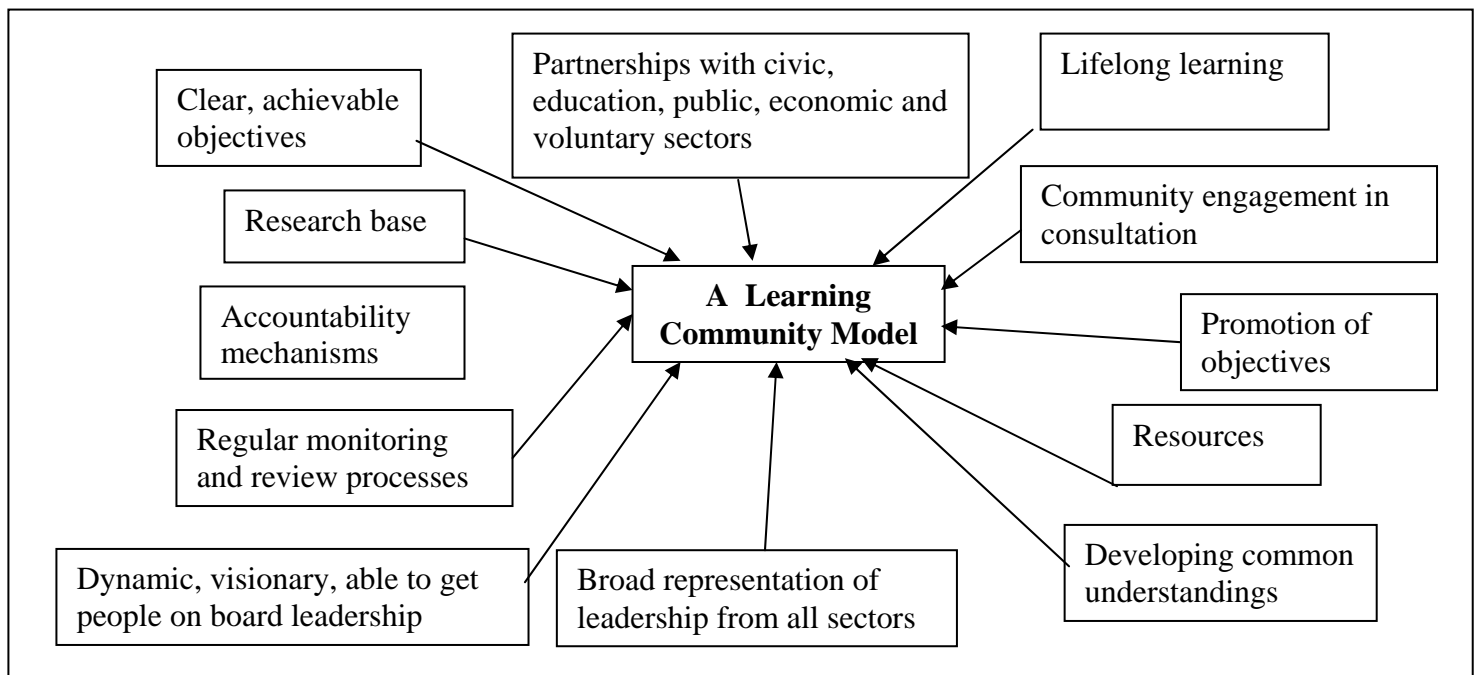


Figure 4: Factors supporting the establishment of a learning community.

In establishing their model of a learning community the K1 community used several strategies that contributed to the success of the approach. The first of these was the clear, achievable objectives that were grounded on a strong research base. The second important factor was dynamic, visionary leaders from a balanced and broad representation of all community sectors who were able to influence and involve community members. This leadership was committed to promoting the objectives in the community by using the organising principle of lifelong learning to consult and engage community members in developing common understandings. Partnerships within the community were a key feature of the approach with effective relationships established between members of civic, education, voluntary, economic and public sectors. Implementation of the objectives was supported by resources such as government funding, expert input, network systems and a full-time coordinator. There was a strong requirement for on-going monitoring and accountability. Although many of these strategies were pre-determined by the Victorian government as requisites for the implementation of a learning community approach, the commitment of K1 community members to the procedures ensured their success. These processes describe how a learning community approach was established in the K1 community.

Part Two

The next section examines evidence collected for question two and focuses on the specific relationships a primary school within the K1 community described in Part One develops to address the needs of their communities.

To what extent did a learning community approach support a K1 primary school to establish partnerships to address the needs of its community in an emerging knowledge society environment?

As the previous section concludes that the K1 approach contains most elements of the OECD learning community model the response to the second question describes the partnerships developed by a primary school to meet the needs of community members and the extent to which the community participated in these partnerships. This section first investigates the needs of community members associated with the K1

primary school and organises them according to the outcomes that Faris indicates prepare a community for the knowledge society.

5.4 The Needs of Community Members

5.4.1 Healthy communities

The K1 school community participants identified the health issues created by a long term drought as the key factor affecting the health of the community. The drought had caused families to become socially fragmented and members to be depressed and suffer emotional and financial hardship. There was a smaller minority group within the community who were transient, single parent or families with alcohol abuse issues and long term welfare recipients.

The drought had increased the mental and emotional stress on members of the community.

KP3 The mental health issues are certainly there without a doubt and part of my role has been to initiate health and well-being events.

The pressures of long term financial strain, an uncertain economic future and families that were split as one parent worked away from home to provide an income and one remained with the family on the farm combined to affect the health and well-being of community members.

The health issues of a minority group of single parent, welfare recipients and alcohol abuse families was of concern to a number of participants.

KP9 Kids come from varied home environments and some have troubles at home.

The students interviewed indicated that teenage pregnancy and alcohol were the key health problems for the youth of the community.

The needs of their community identified by K1 participants include mental and emotional stress and social fragmentation. These are two of the factors outlined in the literature review as being factors that need to be addressed in an emerging knowledge society. The third factor mentioned in the literature review, challenges to traditional values, appears under the third outcome, economic diversity.

5.4.2 Social inclusion and civic engagement

The K1 primary school community contained a diverse population ranging from those who were quite wealthy to a small number of single parent and long term welfare families who needed support to reduce their social isolation. However, the school community was very committed to promoting inclusiveness in the community and the gap between the rich and the poor did not appear to have created a major issue in the health of community members. In fact their commitment to using the partnerships promoted by a learning community approach may have addressed the issue.

The K1 primary school was very active in promoting civic engagement including community responsibility and citizenship amongst their students and other sectors of the community. The learning community strategies used to cultivate community values and social inclusiveness encouraged members of the voluntary sector to engage in school activities and provide these members with a sense of self-worth that acted as a preventative measure to reduce social isolation and maintain the self-esteem of community members. The provision of a responsible role in the community has given the lives of these members the structure and meaning that Toffler describes in the literature review as being essential for a mentally and emotionally fulfilling life. This has positively influenced the health and well-being of community members.

The proactive role the K1 primary school community had taken in addressing the key knowledge society factors of social isolation and community involvement had reduced the needs of the community in these areas.

5.4.3 Economic diversification

Protracted drought was the key factor influencing a need for economic diversification in the K1 community with many families forced to find alternate employment and seek re-training. This increasing pressure for new knowledge and skills to support economic diversification created social tension and health issues for families. There was also an increasing tendency for young people to drift away from a rural life style to the city that had been exacerbated by the drought which had reduced traditional employment opportunities within the community.

KP4 The loss of young people from the area from farming. They can go to the city and get a very well paid job working 9-5 whereas they'll be working on the farm for 70-90 hours a week and get a pittance.

The pressure of changing employment patterns resulted in challenges to traditional family values that contributed to the mental health stress of community members. This challenge to traditional values is described as a factor of an emerging knowledge society. The increased demands of community members for re-training with new knowledge and skills in order to gain employment were also identified in the literature review as factors of the emerging knowledge society.

5.4.4 Environmental sustainability

Members of the K1 community were faced with the environmental impact of long term drought and a government investigation into the sustainability of irrigation practices to support agriculture. The drought had significantly impacted on all sectors of the community not just those involved in agriculture. Recent completion of state and federal government research papers into the sustainability of irrigation practices was also a key issue in the community because it would change the water rights of landowners and affect the crops that could be planted.

As a rural community, the pressure for environmentally sustainable practices that provide a viable economic return is an on-going pressure. This pressure is one that is felt increasingly by rural communities in an emerging knowledge society where global warming, pollution issues and the finite nature of resources are becoming of

critical importance. The planning of governments for a sustainable future is forcing changes to traditional practice that is creating significant tensions in rural communities. It was evident that these tensions were impacting on the social, economic and health development of members of the K1 community.

Analysis

The most significant concern for the K1 primary school community was the social, economic and health issues brought about by the environmental impact of the drought and a government irrigation review. Participants mentioned a small but significant group of families who were presenting with social issues created by single parenting, transience and unemployment. As a result of using a learning community approach the K1 school community had a focused approach to social inclusion and civic engagement that appeared to have created sufficient partnerships to reduce some of the impact of inequities between members of the community.

5.5 Partnerships and participation

As it has already been established that the K1 community was using a learning community approach, it is appropriate to use the criteria of partnerships and participation to determine the extent that the needs of community members in an emerging knowledge society were addressed. The Learning Towns Evaluation of the K1 learning community model conducted by La Trobe University in September, 2001 also used these criteria.

The next section examines community participation in the partnerships created by the K1 primary school to address factors affecting the community and promote the outcomes to be achieved by a learning community approach.

Partnerships in the K1 primary school have been established to support the needs of the community and achieve outcomes that prepare the community for an emerging knowledge-based society. The complexity of the partnerships established by the primary school with organisations from different sectors of the community was extensive with a

mixture of short term specific purpose partnerships and on-going relationships. The partnerships established were for a wide range of purposes, were responsive to the needs of the community and promoted lifelong learning as an organizing principle. One participant indicated that the relationships established between all sectors of the community were so many and at such varied levels that when she had tried she had been unable to visually map the connections.

KP2 When I tried to draw a concept map of the connections, it just became a huge jumbled spider web.

The K1 primary school approach followed the learning community objectives of the Learning Towns Project and aimed to establish partnerships between economic, education, civic, public and voluntary sectors that mobilized learning resources to meet the needs of the community and achieve outcomes. The school commitment to creating partnerships with other community sectors in order to support the needs of the school community was evident in comments from all participants.

KP4 So if for example I was doing a unit, I would look for someone in the community who was an engineer, who had time to talk to the students... anything... that used the community and we'd set it up so it was very well structured. So we would develop those very strong links with the community.

The K1 primary school had a strong focus on developing health and social outcomes in their community but their partnership emphasis was on creating social equity and civic engagement as a way of achieving a healthy community. For example the principal of the primary school was excited about two new projects that were being planned. The first was the ROAR project, a community and education project that provided new born babies with books and established relationships with parents that supported literacy from birth. The second project was a health and fitness program to reduce obesity in young children that was to be run after school hours by voluntary community members on the school grounds. It would include a healthy afternoon tea and games and physical activities. The walking school bus was another community driven health activity that had a high level of participation by primary school children at K1.

In response to community demand the school had instigated ICT training for parents with 30 parents participating in the two sessions. This partnership emphasised the school's commitment to meeting the learning needs of their community and the learning community aspect of using technology as a tool for learning and outcomes. Outcomes promoted by the ICT project addressed knowledge society issues such as learning new skills and knowledge in Delors' *learning to do* pillar and establishing social relationships that would enhance personal development in the *learning to be* pillar.

The school had run a number of very successful events like Grandparents' and Special Friends' Days to promote the development of relationships between school and voluntary community members. This had resulted in a breadth of voluntary community participation in learning activities in the K1 school community that was considerable. For example community partnerships were established with volunteers from sporting organisations to teach students' sports skills and share sporting facilities such as Bocce. Volunteers with specialist skills also participated in school art/craft activities, electives and helped to develop a vegetable garden.

KP1 I coordinate seven volunteers throughout the program. So you've got community members who are supporting you.

There seemed to be a real energy and commitment amongst community members towards volunteering their skills to support student learning opportunities. Parents also were highly committed towards participating in school activities that would enhance their children's learning.

KP6 There are always lots of parents to support excursions.

KP7 Working parents make time for excursions.

KP8 Parents are very supportive.

KP6 P-1 classes have 3 or 4 parents every morning listening to reading.

Several mentoring relationships had been developed between community members and the school community. For example the primary school had developed a mentoring program to support new families to the school community. The mentoring

program involved linking a new family to a local family who would provide support in accessing facilities and introduce the family to community activities. Mentoring relationships established with the local Koori community enabled the primary school students to develop knowledge and understanding of the culture and provided support in developing cross-cultural relationships that reduced the social isolation of this minority group.

The primary school participated in a community organised mentoring program called Old Mates that fostered relationships between the education and the voluntary sector of the community. Although initially commenced to reduce inequities for low socio-economic students by providing a volunteer mentor and role model for students at risk, the mentors involved in the program felt they had learnt as much from the students as the students had learnt from them. The partnerships established had reduced the social isolation of the elderly volunteers and given them renewed self-esteem as valued and worthwhile members of the community. There was a high level of participation by volunteers in the Old Mates program with 44 volunteers working in schools in the district.

The Old Mates theme had been followed through by the K1 primary school with a buddy system between students and the aged care residents in the town. The buddy system aimed to establish cross generational relationships that enhanced respect between students who may be isolated from their own grandparents and elderly people who may be disengaged from the younger generation.

KP6 Year 6 students all have a leadership role in going every week to talk and play games with the residents [aged care facility] for 1-2 hours.

KP1 So to get respect from someone you have to respect them as well so we share this respect between one another.

Volunteer support was regularly sought by the education sector for a range of activities in the K1 primary school and this support was enthusiastically provided and plentiful. The support provided by the volunteer sector of the community was treated with respect by school community members and promoted as being a two way

partnership with students being actively encouraged to give something back to the community.

Many of the formal and informal partnerships established by the K1 primary school focused on supporting the health and well-being of school community members but all incorporated valuing learning and civic responsibility.

KP5 There is a strong sense of community pride and spirit.

The K1 primary school had strong relationships with the Learning Towns Board who established partnerships with local business that provided opportunities to promote learning and opportunities for businesses to support education through funding and displaying student work. For example the Learner of the Month program devised by the Learning Towns Board included learners from every aspect of life and businesses were involved in promoting these learners to the community.

The K1 primary school had built strong partnerships with other members of the education sector that were used to promote learning and the education sector to the community through the local newspaper. Common purpose and outcomes were also promoted through regular meetings between the School Councils of each school community.

The K1 primary school was an integral part of a project called ‘What’s so good about K1?’ developed by the Learning Towns Board in partnership with education, business and voluntary sectors of the community. This program was designed to lift the depression in the community created by the drought.

KP7 ... what we wanted to do was focus on making them feel good about the town even though the world was falling down around us.

The partnership between the K1 school community and the Board ensured the active engagement of students in these programs.

KP7 School kids wrote some great poems...

The emphasis of a learning community approach that fostered partnerships to promote human development, social inclusion and civic engagement between members of this school community had resulted in relationships that benefited all members of the K1 school community, and had influenced many members of the voluntary, public, economic and civic sectors of the community.

KP9 It is an accepting and positive [school] community with wonderful, supportive, helpful people who are always ready to listen.

Analysis

The K1 primary school aimed to engage community members in social activities that promoted lifelong learning and addressed their needs. The K1 primary school was proactive about building partnerships with community sectors to meet the needs of their community and informal and formal systems and networks had been established over a number of years to support these relationships. These networks had become an integral part of the school community as a result of the Learning Towns Project and the high levels of participation indicate that they were successful in addressing the needs of community members as well as promoting the outcomes of civic engagement, social inclusion and health development. However, partnerships to address economic and environmental issues were linked to Learning Towns activities rather than being initiated individually by the primary school.

The partnerships developed by the K1 community were organised in a structured manner to enable achievement of the Learning Towns Program objectives. These objectives focused very clearly on promoting knowledge society outcomes for the community and gave the K1 primary school an overarching goal and focus for organising activities that enabled them to be proactive in dealing with issues rather than reactive. The strength of the partnerships with other sectors and the clarity of direction provided by the Learning Towns Program enabled the K1 primary school to successfully use a learning community approach to address the needs of their community.

The K1 primary school actively encouraged the participation of parents in learning opportunities that supported students and supported parents in becoming

learners themselves as in the case of the ICT sessions. Some opportunities were offered in partnership with community groups however, other learning opportunities that they offered parents were through modelling and mentoring parents. The openness and welcoming feel of the school seemed to have created a school community that worked together to enhance student learning because they had a similar understanding and knowledge of the most effective approach to learning and a direction for the future.

Finally, the extent to which the K1 primary school used a learning community approach to develop partnerships to address the needs of the community appeared to be considerable with high levels of participation in the partnerships described. The school had used the Learning Towns program as the basis for an organised approach that integrated community sectors with the aim of improving outcomes in health development, social inclusion and civic engagement. Improving outcomes in these areas would support the community to move in to an emerging knowledge society environment.

Further Relevant Features of the K1 Learning Community Approach

In joining the Learning Towns Project the K1 community made a commitment to promoting the notion of lifelong learning because it was a key objective of the program as described in Part One of this chapter. The promotion of lifelong learning focused on encouraging the community to recognise that learning can occur in all aspects of their lives and to ‘...encourage formal Learning providers to promote Learning rather than Education or Training (McCullough, M. 2003. p.1). The success of this promotion can be gauged from the consistency of participant responses when asked to define lifelong learning. The common response was that lifelong learning was learning every day in different ways.

KP9 Always learning. Everything you learn stays with you and you build on.

The Learning Towns promotion had successfully expanded the community understanding of knowledge to include an understanding of lifelong learning that was translated into a demand for lifelong learning opportunities. This demand was met

through the establishment of connections between education, community, business, industry and local government. The connections were facilitated by a paid coordinator of a community learning centre. This coordinator was constantly assessing the demands for lifelong learning and organising opportunities that would meet community needs. The coordinator interviewed had been involved with the community learning centre for 15 years and in that time had seen many changes.

KP3 The demand for learning opportunities has shifted from art/craft to lifestyle activities so the roles of people in the centre are constantly changing.

The strong connections with the community are a key aspect of learning in the knowledge society. In the K1 community educational institutions regularly looked outside their own organisations to establish partnerships that would enhance learning opportunities for school community members. For example the Dads Do Make a Difference program hosted by the primary school in conjunction with Relationships Australia was a community initiative. While each K1 educational institution retained its uniqueness a network of learning opportunities were being established with other educational organisations, community and business organisations. The social and emotional relationships that were built as a result of these connections had enhanced the capacity of community members in the *learning to be* and *learning to live together* pillars from Delor's framework with tolerance and acceptance a demonstrated characteristic of the community partnerships developed. For example members of the alienated Youth Outreach group were actively encouraged to not vandalise letter boxes in the community because the letter boxes belonged to people who had voluntarily helped them with carpentry or art/ craft activities. Several participants also noted that the culture of indigenous members was promoted and respected.

KP8 Koori representatives talk to the students about their culture.

An interesting aspect of the partnerships promoted in the K1 community was that each project was launched with a significant social activity. For example, the 'Dads do Make a Difference' commenced with a pizza night to which families were invited and the Old Mates program was celebrated with a special afternoon tea function to which politicians, local government officials and community and education members

were invited. The celebration of these special events appears to have given projects greater status and encouraged community participation. ‘Anecdotal evidence of the development of other learning communities in Australia and internationally suggests, celebration and food are important in the development of the culture of a learning community’ (Phillips, Wheeler & White, 2005, p.26).

The use of mentoring as a strategy in the K1 community enhanced members’ knowledge and understanding of their personal being and their capacity to live and work together. When this was used as a cross generational activity, it broke down barriers that included the fear the elderly have of groups of young people and developed a respect and tolerance of each other that contributed to the community capacity to learn to live together. Whether these activities had reduced anti-social behaviour by youth in the community is difficult to know; however, there was visually very little evidence of vandalism in the community. Providing the opportunities and support for youth to take responsibility for community youth activities and developing leadership in youth through providing practical opportunities to organise youth events also enhanced the community capacity to live together. These activities gave some young people the skills and understandings of how to apply for funding opportunities, implement, organise and accept accountability for activities. Involvement in these activities created pride in their community and the capacity to be proactive in making changes if they so desired.

In the K1 community mentoring was a very valued support strategy that was used in many ways. However, in each mentoring instance time was dedicated to training mentors in their role and strategies and time was dedicated to developing and maintaining the relationships. It was not an ad hoc process that just happened. For example students who moved from Year 6 into the secondary college spend two days bonding and doing cooperative activities with their mentors at the end of the year before they move into the secondary setting and all Year 6 students were involved from the two government schools and the catholic school. Then during the term there were regular times set aside for the younger students to connect with their mentors.

Strategies, activities and projects that happened in the K1 community were also usually supported by an expert, research or a critical friend. For example the cross-

school professional learning model for Year 5-9 teachers in the district sought the support of a university professor to act as a critical friend. The promotion of the Learning Towns project commenced with a function that had a guest speaker who was an expert or had done research in learning communities and a Women in Business network started with a guest speaker who was a local politician, business woman and mother.

KP3 It is designed for women across all sorts of industry... The first activity will be a guest speaker...

So there was a conscious effort by community members to ensure the success of projects by seeking specialist expertise to enhance their own and the community knowledge and understandings in that area.

The learning community approach in the K1 school community clearly focused on lifelong learning as an organising principle and social goal as described in the OECD model. There was also evidence of community participation in successful partnerships established between sectors that supported the social and economic goals described by Faris as being a feature of a learning community approach.

CHAPTER SIX

Cross Case Analysis

In Chapter 6 comparisons will be made about how each Case Study community established a learning community and the extent that this approach supported primary schools to develop the partnerships necessary to address the needs of their communities in a knowledge society environment. While each community clearly had a unique context and vision it is possible to examine similarities and differences in their approaches. A causal model is developed to show the factors that were effective in establishing a learning community approach in each Case Study. A narrative compares the partnerships developed by each school and the factors that enabled each school to respond to the needs of their community in a knowledge society environment.

Part One

Research question one

How is a learning community approach established in an Australian community?

Comparisons will be made between the learning community approach that was established in each Case Study community and the OECD model described by Faris in order to determine the success of strategies used in each approach. Strategies that were successful in each context will be outlined.

Comparisons will be made under the following headings:

- Lifelong Learning
- Objectives

A table will summarise the differences between the learning community approach of each case study and Faris' learning community model. A Causal Model has been developed from the factors from each Case Study that were successful in establishing a learning community approach.

6.1 Lifelong learning

The theme of lifelong learning must be an organising principle in the establishment of a learning community according to the OECD definition. Lifelong learning was promoted as an objective in both case study communities, however, each community approached this aspect from a completely different point of view, and the point of view has influenced the resulting learning community. Sheed and Bottrell suggest, 'Lifelong learning has become one of those terms that is readily used by those who want to promote education and training in Australia' (Sheed & Bottrell, 2001, p.24). Kearns reports that research conducted by Adult Learning Australia in 2004 indicates '...lifelong learning is poorly understood in Australia...' (Kearns, 2005, p.iii). My research supports the findings of these researchers, as lifelong learning was a term readily used by both communities to promote education and training but the level of understanding of the concept varied between the communities and the interpretation of the concept lifelong learning appeared to be a significant factor in determining the learning community approach that was implemented.

The K1 community used lifelong learning as the driver to achieve the objectives of their learning community and this approach is similar to the OECD model where lifelong learning is defined as an organising principle and social goal. In the K1 community lifelong learning was promoted as a catalyst for social activities and not just to promote education and training. The Board planned strategies to develop a common understanding of lifelong learning with members of the community and participants' comments demonstrated an understanding of lifelong learning as a birth to death concept that encompassed all four of Delors' pillars of learning and Brown's overlapping sites of learning. The Board's coordinated approach to developing an understanding of lifelong learning community was recognised by most participants and most indicated that they valued learning and saw it as an on-going natural part of life that was not confined to education and training institutions.

However, while the M1 community included lifelong learning as an outcome of the vision statement, their use of the term was more to promote education and training as suggested by Sheed and Bottrell. Their emphasis was on formal educational facilities rather than the broader based lifelong learning opportunities that could be established between different sectors of the community. The Visions Committee focus seemed to

promote the multi-purpose campus as the means to achieve lifelong learning but promotional activities did not focus on developing a common understanding even within their leadership committee and lifelong learning was not used as a social goal or organising principle for implementation of the vision. Participant responses indicate that the Visions Committee focus did not develop the understanding of lifelong learning that is a key aspect of the OECD learning community model and the poor understanding of lifelong learning that resulted influenced the learning community that was developed.

The timing for the establishment of a learning community approach in each community has also influenced the understanding and application of the approach in each community. The M1 community developed their vision in 1992 when the concept of a learning community was just gathering international impetus and well before the 1996 OECD Ministerial policy on 'Making Lifelong Learning a Reality for All'. The K1 community's establishment of a learning community approach commenced in 2000 and was supported by several years of international policy thinking, research and implementation in OECD countries. The M1 community could have accessed this research in later years, but a significant feature of their approach was that the initial vision was not reviewed or regularly monitored, and this impacted on their understanding and application of lifelong learning.

The research findings indicate that the K1 approach to promoting lifelong learning created shared understandings and a value of learning amongst most participants whereas the M1 approach resulted in mixed understandings of lifelong learning. The importance of the K1 approach to promoting lifelong learning is supported by the Australian National Training Authority in their national marketing strategy for lifelong learning 'Shared vision about the value, impact and significance of lifelong learning' (Australian National Training Authority, 1999, p.20).

The next section compares how the objectives to establish a learning community model were developed in each community.

6.2 Objectives

The OECD learning community model states that objectives are to be set and owned by the community. The objectives developed by each case study community investigated in this research were clear, achievable and appeared to be understood by participants. The key objective of the M1 community was the building of an educational and recreational facility. From this overarching objective the community developed more specific objectives that the research has demonstrated could be aligned with the OECD definition of a learning community model. The M1 objectives were initiated by members of the community, addressed an identified need and were developed after extensive consultation with the community thus providing the ownership for objectives that is stated in the OECD definition. The K1 community was provided with a generic set of objectives that were focused on the development of lifelong learning understandings and partnerships between all sectors of the community to promote opportunities rather than the development of physical facilities. The K1 community objectives were based on research into the OECD learning community model and other learning communities. While the K1 community did not set their own objectives they agreed to them by participating in the Learning Towns program and participant comments suggest that the Learning Towns Board developed strategies to ensure that the generic objectives were meaningful for the local context of their community thus providing the ownership of the OECD model.

At the time that the M1 community set their objectives, 1992, there was limited research available on a learning community approach and the OECD had just begun to investigate lifelong learning. The lack of evidence to support a learning community approach may have influenced the objectives that were set by the Visions Committee. However, the Visions Committee existed for over 10 years, and during this time there is no evidence to suggest that current research was investigate with a view to adjusting the objectives, in fact, there was no evidence to suggest that a research based approach was taken. The K1 community commenced a learning community approach in 2000. Their approach was guided by a significant body of international research that included, the OECD work on lifelong learning and a learning community approach.

Each community was very conscious of the need to establish community ownership and conducted extensive consultation activities with members. The process used by the M1 community commenced first with community consultation, followed by committee development of objectives and engagement of a media consultancy to promote and present the objectives to the community for further consultation. The K1 community first developed common understandings of the objectives amongst their committee members then committee members promoted the objectives to all sectors of the community before projects and activities that would engage the community in developing understandings were commenced. The M1 approach to community consultation successfully established knowledge of the objectives and a community commitment to the educational focus of the objectives but community support for the recreational facilities was less successful. If greater involvement from all sectors of the community mentioned in the OECD model particularly the voluntary and public had been obtained, this result may have been different. The K1 approach of strategically targeting all five sectors of the community and using social activities to develop ownership and understanding of the objectives has strong connections to the OECD definition.

Each community initiated a committee or board to facilitate the implementation of the learning community model. The committee was composed of representatives from a broad range of sectors within the community including; education, business, community, local government, government and industry. These sectors align closely to the OECD community sectors described as; education, economic which covers business and industry, public which incorporates health and social organisations, voluntary and civic or local government. Although some of the founding members of the M1 committee were conscious that they needed a committee that was broadly representative and not dominated by educators, their committee ended up with 50% of the representatives being educators and a founding chairperson who was an educator. Although the chairperson changed some years later and became a local government representative, the initial dominance of educators meant that education became the main focus for the committee rather than community engagement in learning. In the K1 community there was an equitable distribution of representatives and a funded coordinator to lead the project who was not an educator. Feedback from members of the

education sector in K1 indicates that this seems to have fostered a broader engagement of community sectors in learning rather than just the educational sector.

Each community had strong partnerships with local government that supported implementation with resources and consultation processes. The M1 leadership committee contained a local government representative and partnerships were established to conduct community surveys and to provide some funding. As members of the Learning Towns Program, a key objective of the K1 community was to reinforce the role of local government in supporting the community. As a result, local government established community consultation processes to develop strategic plans that were resourced by the shire and these processes promoted implementation of the Learning Towns objectives. The successful establishment of relationships with the civic sector to promote the mobilization of learning resources was an aspect of the OECD model.

Both communities also sought to establish state government alliances to promote the establishment of a learning community model. The K1 community did this by becoming part of a government funded program while the M1 community instigated an alliance with a local politician that enabled them to use his political leadership to gain financial and planning support for the project from the government.

When implementing their learning community model, the K1 community received a high level of expert support from government agencies and were encouraged to use technology as a tool to facilitate learning opportunities and set up network links with other learning communities. The use of technology as a tool to achieve the objectives of the community was promoted by the coordinator who set up strategic links with other learning communities at a state, national and international level that supported implementation. The multi-purpose campus in the M1 community was also designed to promote the use of learning technologies to achieve objectives such as the establishment of links with a university. The use of technology in each community was for different purposes with K1 using technology to provide expertise to support the Learning Towns implementation and M1 using technology to enhance the educational opportunities available to the community. While the purpose was different, both communities did use technology to achieve their objectives as suggested in the OECD definition. The OECD learning community model as described by Faris in his

conceptual framework suggests ‘...making practical but imaginative use of learning technologies as a tool to achieve the objectives that are set and owned by the community’(Faris, 2001, p.4).

As members of a government funded program, the establishment of a learning community in the town of K1 had a strong accountability element with requirements to account for finances and outcomes through the collection of data on strategies and engagement in an evaluation exercise conducted by a university. This accountability aspect when combined with the annual local government community review and planning processes resulted in on-going monitoring of the project and regular analysis of future directions. This monitoring and review was not evident in the M1 community although they had been implementing their vision for approximately 12 years and during that time many of the initial objectives had been achieved. There was a strong sense from several participants that it was time to review and change direction in the M1 community but that had not yet occurred.

The OECD learning community model is a ‘... village, town, city or region that is preparing for the rapidly emerging knowledge-based society...’ (Faris, 2001, p.4). In the K1 community the guidelines of the Learning Towns Project had given community members an understanding of the issues of knowledge society and the outcomes that would be necessary to achieve a learning community in a knowledge-based society. Faris says that in learning communities, as defined by the OECD, ‘...there is a systematic attempt to view and analyse, through the...lens of lifelong learning, the learning needs of individuals and groups’ (Faris, 2001, p.20). This description appears to closely match the K1 community where the learning needs of community members were identified in an organised approach and lifelong learning strategies implemented to address these needs. While the M1 community was very successful in achieving their objective, their focus on modern, education facilities rather than lifelong learning indicates that they were not a learning community. Faris, in his comparison between a learning community and a conventional community, suggests that a community that views education as a ‘...cost...’ ‘...prestigious...’ and ‘...an individual activity for individual benefit...’(Faris, 2001, p.20) is still conventional. He goes on to describe a conventional community as ‘reacting to change’ rather than being ‘proactive’ and this was certainly the M1 community’s approach to preparing for the emerging knowledge

society while several participants suggested that the K1 community was very proactive regarding change.

Table 6 provides a summary of the key factors influencing the establishment of a learning community in each case study and enables a comparison with the OECD model.

Table 6:
Summary of the Key Factors affecting the establishment of a Learning Community

Key Factors	OECD Model	Case Study One- M1	Case Study Two-K1
Identified Need	The economic and social goals of an emerging knowledge society.	Improved educational and recreational opportunities and facilities.	Economic and social improvement
Lifelong Learning	Lifelong learning is the organising principle and social goal.	Lifelong learning an objective. No common understandings at community or school community level. Some participant commitment to lifelong learning.	Lifelong learning an objective Common understandings at school and community levels. Participant commitment to lifelong learning embedded in thinking. Lifelong learning an organising principle.
Objectives	Agreed objectives set and owned by the community.	Clear objectives-devised by the committee in consultation with the community Focus on physical resources- educational and recreational Media promotion- consultants used.	Clear objectives- generic to project. Research base for set objectives. Focus on lifelong learning and partnerships Promotion- implementation of projects and activities to engage community.
Partnerships	Partnerships to mobilize learning resources between all five sectors: - civic, public, education, economic and voluntary.	Political alliance Partnership with local government Leadership group was representative of all five sectors but not equitable representation	Support networks with other communities. Partnership with local government. Leadership group was representative of all five sectors
Consultation		Extensive community consultation Leadership promotion of consultation	Extensive community consultation Consultation with experts Consultation with like communities Leadership promotion of consultation.

Key Factors	OECD Model	Case Study One- M1	Case Study Two-K1
Leadership		Real leaders Responsible Not supportive of the vision Promote the vision Consultative Leadership- a committee Broad sectoral representation of leadership- educators half of the committee Committee chair- initially an educator then local government. Lack of continuity	Strong, dynamic Visionary Committed Able to get people on board Consultative Leadership- a board and a paid coordinator Broad sectoral representation of leadership on the Board- not dominated by educators.
Accountability		No review 12 year project	Accountability processes(govt) Evaluation by researchers Review- by leadership 5 year project
Technology	Technology as a tool to achieve objectives	Technology as a tool to achieve a specific objective	Technology as a tool to establish partnerships, consultation, expertise, networks

Analysis

The focus of research question one was to collect data that describes the processes and strategies that the two case study towns used to establish a learning community approach to schooling. The data collected was predominantly from a primary school perspective and the education sector of the community. From examination and analysis of the data collected, it is possible to draw conclusions regarding the strategies used and describe some elements that other communities may wish to consider to support the establishment of a learning community that is based on the OECD model. In each case study chapter, the factors influencing the establishment of a learning community approach to schooling have been described diagrammatically. The connections between the most effective strategies from both communities are framed and described in this section in the form of a causal model.

The evidence of this research suggests that a key element for the development of a learning community is lifelong learning and for this reason it has a central position in the causal model. This evidence is supported by the OECD model that defines lifelong learning as the organising principle or social goal for the establishment of a learning community and thus gives lifelong learning importance as a core feature. The K1 community described how in their approach they had used lifelong learning as an organising principle to create social activities and the partnerships necessary to meet their objectives. However, in the M1 community lifelong learning was an objective

rather than an organising principle and as such did not have a central role in implementation. The causal model developed as a result of this research places lifelong learning as the conduit through which all other aspects necessary to achieve a learning community must directly or indirectly pass.

The causal model links the objectives of a learning community approach directly to lifelong learning as evidence suggests that strategies to achieve objectives should use lifelong learning as an organising principle. In the K1 community the connection between lifelong learning and the key objectives of the K1 community were evident in the activities that the Board used to promote the Learning Towns Program. This is similar to the OECD model where objectives are described as needing to be set and owned by the community and focused on preparing the community for a knowledge society environment. In the K1 and M1 community objectives were clear, achievable, agreed and well promoted. The K1 objectives were also based on extensive research that considered how to prepare a community for a knowledge society environment. To achieve the objectives set by the community effective partnerships needed to be established.

Partnerships established in order to develop a learning community approach need to use lifelong learning as an organising principle or social goal according to the OECD definition and this is demonstrated by the K1 primary school in their 'Dad's do make a Difference' program. For this reason partnerships are linked to lifelong learning in the causal model. The K1 community objectives aimed to establish partnerships between community sectors and endeavoured to consider the learning needs of all community members when providing lifelong learning opportunities. Strong state and local government partnerships were developed in both communities to support achievement of the objectives and implementation of a learning community approach. The impact of successful partnerships on objectives using lifelong learning as a central organising principal is demonstrated in the causal model which shows partnerships and objectives with direct links to lifelong learning.

The OECD model of a learning community describes technology as a tool that enables communities to achieve their objectives and this is supported by the research

evidence from the two case study communities. Therefore technology is linked to objectives in the causal model. In the K1 and M1 community technology was used to establish partnerships to support the achievement of objectives but the K1 community also used technology to establish support networks with experts and other learning communities.

Research evidence in the two case study communities suggested several other factors, accountability, consultation and leadership, also influenced implementation. Accountability for managing implementation and regular review and monitoring of objectives was mentioned by participants in both communities. As the K1 approach was government funded accountability processes were clearly defined with monitoring, reviewing and evaluating the objectives of the program a vital element. The M1 approach did not have clear accountability processes and several participants suggested that an evaluation would have enhanced the M1 approach. Therefore the causal model links accountability processes to objectives.

Consultation to establish the agreed objectives was a key feature of implementation in both communities. In the K1 and M1 community leaders promoted extensive consultation within the community to develop ownership of the objectives. In the K1 community consultation processes used lifelong learning as an organising principle to engage community members in activities to develop an understanding of the objectives. The K1 community also fostered consultation with experts and other learning communities in order to support implementation of their objectives. Therefore while consultation has been directly linked to objectives in the causal model, lifelong learning is an essential final step in the achievement of a learning community.

Leadership was a frequently mentioned factor influencing the achievement of objectives in both communities. The importance of effective leadership is supported in an evaluation of the Hume Global Learning Village. 'You need leadership that is articulate, passionate and believes in the cause' (Phillips, Wheeler, & White, 2005, p.30). In the M1 community several participants noted that lack of, or token, commitment by individual leaders and lack of continuity in leadership had affected outcomes. Despite this, the Visions Committee had existed for over ten years and during

that time appeared to have maintained a clear direction as a group. Participant feedback seemed to suggest that it was the individual leadership of principals that was subject to periods of discontinuity. Participants in the K1 community indicated that the success in their community was in part due to several dynamic, visionary leaders that could ‘get people on board’. In both communities leadership needed to be representative of all sectors of the community in order to be effective as demonstrated by the compositions of the K1 Board and the M1 Visions Committee. Leadership was also a significant element in promoting effective consultation and developing partnerships between community sectors. Therefore, leadership has been given connections to partnerships, objectives and consultation in the causal model.

In conclusion, the causal model developed through analysis of the data collected from the communities examined in this research project provides a description of the elements that have influenced the establishment of a learning community approach in two rural Australian communities. Connections between the data collected from the two case study communities and the OECD definition of a learning community are also described. The elements identified in the case study communities are analysed and cause and effect relationships are sought. Data from the M1 community indicated that the identified elements could combine to successfully achieve objectives but the K1 community data clearly suggested that a learning community could not be achieved without lifelong learning as the organising principle. The relationship between the elements is described in the following diagram.

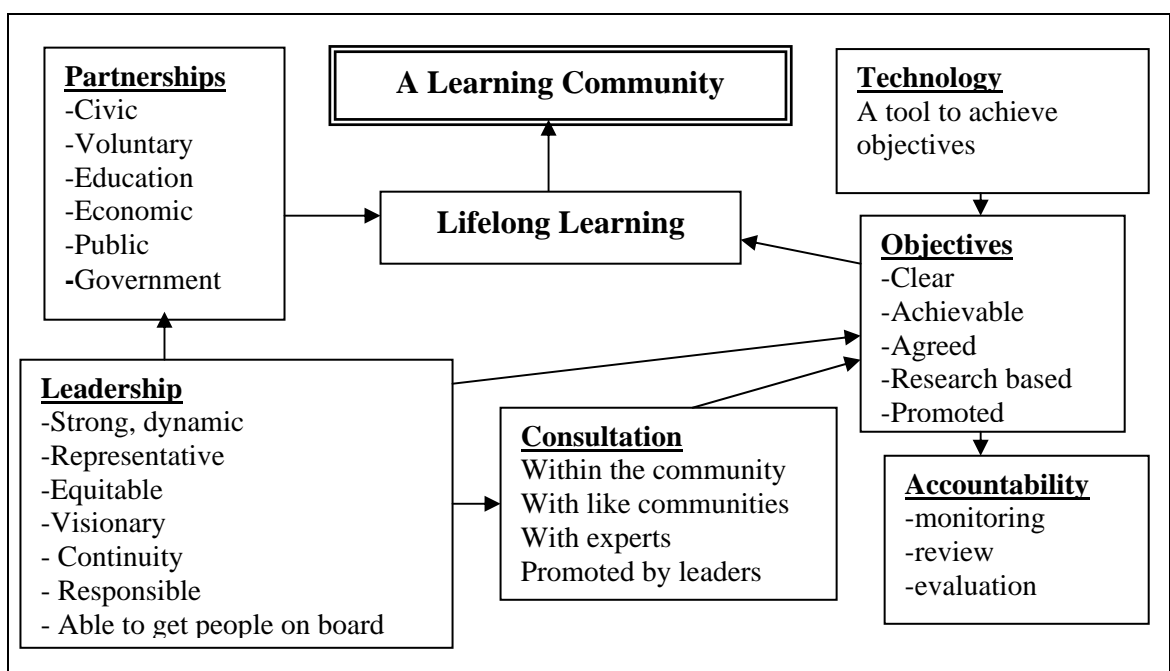


Figure 5: *Establishing a learning community*

Part Two

This section seeks to explore patterns that have emerged from the two case studies in response to the following question:

Research question two: *To what extent does a learning community approach support primary schools to establish partnerships that address the needs of their communities in an emerging knowledge society environment?*

As described in the causal model in the previous section, the establishment of partnerships between sectors of the community to promote lifelong learning opportunities is a key element of a learning community approach. Question two focuses on the extent to which the learning community approach of establishing partnerships between community sectors supports the school to provide the lifelong learning opportunities that meet the needs of their community. To answer this question the next section identifies the needs of the communities, examines the partnerships schools have established and how they meet these needs and finally makes connections between community needs and the outcomes a community needs to prepare for a knowledge society environment.

6.3 Community Needs

The needs of community members in the two case study school communities are described in the following table.

Table 7:
Community Issues

Outcomes for a knowledge society	M1 School	K1 School
Healthy communities	Transience Unemployment Increased mental health issues Substance abuse Changing values Emotional and financial stress	Transience Youth unemployment, pregnancy and alcohol abuse Changing values Depression Emotional and financial stress
Social inclusion and civic engagement	Racial issues Social fragmentation of families	Social fragmentation of families Long term unemployed
Economic diversification	Businesses closing down Industry needing to change	Businesses closing down Industry needing to change
Environmental sustainability	Collapse of the timber industry Loss of global markets for horticulture	Drought Collapse of dairying and fruit Irrigation review -government

Several patterns emerged from analysing the needs of the two Case Study communities. The first was that both communities were struggling to adjust to an environmental issue, drought and a ban on logging. In both towns the environmental concerns had created significant social and economic issues that were impacting on all sectors of the community. Business and industry were being forced to diversify, close down or adjust to a reduced income and this in turn affected local government as some businesses did close and people left town. The education sector was suddenly required to provide a higher level of education and re-training opportunities for new business and industry and families with children in schools were placed under significant financial stress which affected parenting and family life. The public sector was called upon to provide a greater level of support to meet the emotional and mental needs of community members. In the M1 community, the demands created by the economic impact on families meant that voluntary support from parents in the community was at an all time low because both parents were working to keep the family alive. While there was some evidence that grandparents were stepping in to fill volunteer roles, the engagement of this generation was not being actively promoted. However, in the K1 community, the elderly were strategically targeted to volunteer for mentoring roles for students and to teach students skills in a range of situations. Members of the K1 primary school also indicated that parent support for school activities was always at a high level. Participant comments suggested that the voluntary sector of the community was highly valued and played an important role in supporting the needs of community members.

The second pattern to emerge was that health and well-being and social inclusion were significant issues in both communities. Both towns had a percentage of the community that was struggling with mental health issues, substance abuse, single parenting, transience and low-socio-economic status that were isolating these members from the community. The M1 community had a greater number of these families including a gradually increasing group of indigenous families. For both communities environmental issues had also had an affect on the health and well-being of members with depression and other mental health issues being of real concern for families. Some of the health issues were caused by the financial stress of an economic downturn and others were a result of emotional stress from being forced to completely change a traditional lifestyle and learn new skills or apply skills to a new situation.

In the primary school context the partnerships developed to promote a learning community approach were largely focused on social inclusion and the health and well-being of community members although the K1 primary school had a very strong emphasis on civic engagement. Investigation of a secondary or tertiary education context may have revealed a greater emphasis on partnerships with business and industry as organisations at these levels traditionally have stronger connections to the economic sector of the community. The partnerships established by both schools to meet these needs are examined in the next section.

6.4 Learning Community Partnerships

Examining the partnerships each primary school established with other community sectors to address the needs of community members gives an idea of the extent to which a learning community approach has been successful. ‘The literature on learning communities lists partnerships as one of the key success factors’ (Phillips, Wheeler & White, 2005, p.24).

In the M1 community it was clear that some very successful partnerships had been initiated by the primary school with several community sectors and other educational organisations to support the health and well-being of members. The most successful partnership, the Health Committee composed of education, health and justice representatives, focused on creating a coordinated response to the needs of families who were experiencing multiple health, social and financial issues. The other partnerships that were fostered at the school level were community events such as the Cherry Festival, and school events such as Grandparents’ Day, that encouraged social interaction between parents, students and staff. The M1 primary school had also developed partnerships with the other education sector organisations that were to be on the multi-purpose campus that would promote the integration of learning opportunities for a wide range of community members of all ages into one environment.

The K1 primary school had multiple partnerships established with the public, voluntary, economic and education sectors that were designed to promote healthy communities, social inclusion and civic engagement. The K1 primary school actively

promoted civic engagement with several partnerships that enabled volunteers to contribute to school activities through mentoring activities such as the Old Mates Program and students to volunteer to support members of the wider community as the Year 6 students did when they visited the residents of a nearby retirement centre. The strategy of mentoring was highly valued in the K1 community as it was in Edmonton, Canada, where a learning city based on the OECD model has been developed. In the K1 community mentoring relationships had been established for students moving from kindergarten to primary school and from primary school to secondary school. There were also volunteers who mentored students with special needs and students in the alienated youth program. The K1 primary school engaged in partnerships with the public sector such as Relationships Australia with the 'Dads do make a Difference' program that supported the health and well-being of families in the school and developed partnerships with the voluntary sector to support the social and emotional health of students through mentoring. Participant comments indicated that the numerous partnerships established by the K1 primary school addressed not only the immediate needs of community members but were directed towards promoting outcomes that would support an emerging knowledge society. For example the mentoring relationships between students and the elderly fostered understandings between the generations that would reduce fear and develop respect. These relationships promoted outcomes that would reduce social isolation and increase social inclusion and civic engagement.

For both primary schools their main focus was the social and emotional health of members and this probably is indicative of the age level of students in this type of school community. A senior high school community may perhaps have a greater focus on establishing partnerships with the economic sector of the community in order to meet the employment and training needs of their students who are older. In each primary school the partnerships that they devised effectively supported community members in need. However, there was less evidence of the M1 community initiating lifelong learning opportunities to promote outcomes such as civic engagement and social inclusion rather than reacting to needs. Faris suggests that a proactive approach is more indicative of a learning community while a reactive approach suggests a conventional community. A learning community goal is '...the development of a lifelong learning culture ...' while the results of a conventional community are '...some individuals promote lifelong learning values...' (Faris, 2001, p.21). Perhaps a shared understanding

of lifelong learning and the use of lifelong learning as an organising principle would have enhanced the partnerships developed by the M1 primary school community. As Kearns says, ‘...lifelong learning is poorly understood in Australia, and that this acts as a barrier to concerted partnership action’ (Kearns, 2005. p.iii).

The K1 primary school was an active contributor to the lifelong learning activities that were occurring in their community and a shared understanding of lifelong learning was evident amongst members. While the K1 primary school was committed to being a part of the partnerships that the Learning Towns project fostered, the partnerships that the primary school established supported the Learning Towns objectives and used lifelong learning as an organising principle. The clearly structured guidelines and objectives in the K1 learning community approach provided the K1 primary school with support in establishing community partnerships and a framework with clear goals to initiate the establishment of their own partnerships with community sectors.

Examination of the partnerships established by the K1 and M1 schools with their communities reveals several factors from a learning community approach that promote the success of the partnerships. The first factor is that lifelong learning should be the organising principle for the learning opportunities provided by the partnerships and shared understandings of lifelong learning need to be developed. The second important factor is that partnerships established should promote desirable future outcomes as well as responding to immediate community needs. The third factor is that a learning community approach needs to be a whole community initiative rather than a single organisation and promote partnerships across a wide range of community sectors. Consideration of these factors will determine the extent to which a learning community approach has support the development of partnerships that meet the needs of a community that is preparing for the knowledge society environment described in the next section.

6.5 Knowledge Society Environment

There is no doubt that each community was being affected by knowledge society issues that have been described earlier in the literature review chapter. The three inter-related drivers of change in an emerging knowledge society that Faris describes as globalization, technology and new knowledge have each contributed to the tensions in the case study communities of this research. Globalization was directly responsible for changes to horticultural markets in the M1 community and indirectly affected these markets in the K1 community. However, the second most significant driver of change in each of these communities was the importance of environmentally sustainable practices. As the communities were both rural and relied heavily on sustainable environmental practices and global markets for economic survival, the impact of globalization and environmental issues resulted in an increased pressure for diversification in business and industry through the use of new technology and the acquisition of new knowledge. The tensions created by these change factors affected the human and social development in each community.

As Toffler predicted, the drivers of change in the case study communities resulted in challenges to traditional values and social issues that affected the health and well-being of members. In each community a need for economic diversification put immense pressure on families to change their traditional ways of life in order to remain economically stable. Families who had for several generations been employed as farmers or timber workers were forced to look for other employment and in some instances this fragmented families with the father working away from home and the mother and children remaining on the property. Children who would have traditionally taken over the family property sought other employment and often left the rural community for the city. As families struggled with these changes to traditional patterns of behaviour, social issues and stress that affected their health resulted.

Each community also had a significant proportion of the population who were transient, unemployed, socially isolated or suffered from racial or mental health issues. This percentage of the community were of concern to all members as they often did not have the traditional values of other community members and were presenting with

social issues such as teenage pregnancy, substance abuse and physical abuse. The education sector, in particular, of each community was being required to have a greater role in supporting these students and their families. Each primary school in the case study communities had accepted some responsibility for supporting these families and had developed appropriate partnerships with other community sectors.

The M1 primary school identified the social and health issues affecting their community and developed partnerships to focus on these issues as did the K1 primary school. However, the partnerships developed by the M1 primary school targeted immediate needs whereas the K1 primary school, through their involvement in the Learning Towns Project, had clear guidelines based on research evidence to guide the development of partnerships that would address future needs. The objectives that guided the K1 primary school were also being implemented in several other Victorian towns which gave the objectives validity and ensured a commitment from the leaders of the various community sectors. The extensive and lengthy research base that supported Learning Towns objectives gave the K1 primary school a knowledge base that proved invaluable in underpinning their actions. The ability of participants in the K1 community to be able to explain and articulate the concepts of the Learning Towns Project and their relationships to changing societal needs was noticeable.

KP4 Children aren't having fathers to lead the way for them and act as role models....So for programs like the parenting skills it's the whole learning community embracing that community.

As the concepts were derived from research, this provided a deep understanding of the factors impacting on society and ensured that strategies and partnerships that promoted the concepts were developed.

In response to question two, the data collected clearly suggests that there were similarities between the two case study communities regarding the needs of their communities and these needs were influenced by knowledge society factors. While both schools successfully identified the health and well-being needs of their communities and established partnerships to address these needs, the K1 primary school made connections between these needs and the emerging knowledge society and was proactive in establishing partnerships to foster social inclusion and civic engagement

that would prepare their school community for future changes. The proactive approach to developing partnerships in the K1 primary school developed through involvement in the Learning Towns Project and the use of a learning community approach. The commitment of the K1 primary school to the use of a learning community approach provided them with effective community support systems and relationships that promoted the development of partnerships. The K1 primary school was able to use the key aspects of a learning community approach, lifelong learning and objectives, to effectively support the development of a complex and effective network of partnerships. Therefore evidence suggests that the use of a learning community approach did support the K1 primary school to establish partnerships to address the needs of their community. However, as discussed previously, the tools to measure the extent of this support are still in their infancy and the data collected could not provide conclusive evidence.

The M1 primary school partnerships that were established were effective in addressing the needs of their school community members. However, the partnerships developed were less extensive and focused on identified needs rather than promoting outcomes for the future. The community vision for the future, of which they were a part, considered lifelong learning as an objective and not an organising principle and this limited the scope of the partnerships established by the primary school. For this reason while partnerships established in the M1 community were successful, they were limited in their capacity to address the needs of their community and prepare for the emerging knowledge society environment.

In conclusion, the data collected suggests that primary schools that use a learning community approach to establish partnerships with their community can be effective in supporting the needs of their community members and prepare them for the knowledge society. However, the measurement tools to define the extent to which this approach is successful are still being refined and the data collected in this research is not sufficient to make conclusive judgements in this matter.

6.6 Implementing the Approach in Other Communities

The OECD Learning Community approach has gained increasing credibility and impetus at an international and national level with web sites established to promote networks, regular conferences and government support as in Victoria. The two case study communities examined by this research provide an insight into how a learning community approach can be promoted and how effective the partnerships developed can be in supporting the needs of communities in a knowledge society environment. For individuals or communities considering a learning community approach there is now considerable research available for support. The findings from the two communities examined in this project add to that research suggesting that the aspects described below are important considerations.

Lifelong learning

From examination of the two different approaches used in the case study communities it would seem that lifelong learning is a central element of a learning community approach. The two aspects of lifelong learning that were actively promoted by one community were the development of a common understanding of lifelong learning and the use of lifelong learning as an organising principle and social goal for activities and events within the community. While both communities successfully addressed the *learning to do* and *learning to know* pillars of learning only one community addressed all four pillars of learning including; *learning to be* and *learning to live together*.

Partnerships

Although different approaches were used in the two case study communities both valued effective partnerships as being important. The effectiveness of the partnerships established was enhanced by a clear focus on achieving objectives that address community needs. The partnerships established were short or long term and involved two or more sectors of the community. However, in one community the

involvement of all sectors of the community in building a diverse range of effective partnerships between community groups and organisations was a key strategy.

Objectives

In both communities a clear vision or objectives was adopted to guide the project and this was based on the identified needs of the people in the community. Extensive consultation with the community ensured that these objectives were owned by community members. In one community the objectives promoted outcomes that will support a community to move in to a knowledge society environment and these outcomes included those suggested by Faris; healthy communities, social inclusion and civic engagement, environmental sustainability and economic diversity.

Leadership

Leadership was mentioned as a key factor in each community. In one community the continuity of leadership was emphasized and both described a need to establish a leadership team that contained an equitable representation of members from all community sectors. Participants listed the desirable qualities of leaders as; visionary, consultative, real, 'able to get people on board' and committed.

Accountability

In one community regular and specific practices to monitor, review and evaluate the objectives and partnerships were implemented. These practices were in some measure designed to account for the resources invested in implementation but also provided support in sustaining a learning community approach. However, in the other case study community monitoring and reviewing had been irregular and less precise resulting in several participants indicating that there was a real need to evaluate the direction of the vision.

Conclusion

When commencing this research project, my interest was in the suitability of a learning community approach as a strategy for a rural Western Australian primary school. However, my research has clearly demonstrated that while a learning community approach can provide effective support for Australian schools, a whole community commitment is necessary rather than it being initiated by the education sector. While whole community participation should be achievable in a small rural community, it requires committed and dynamic leadership from all community sectors to promote the vision, particularly as rural communities are traditionally very conservative. However, I believe that the partnerships promoted by a learning community approach are an effective way for small rural communities to ensure the sustainability of services and support the community in meeting the challenges of the knowledge society.

An important insight gained from my research, has been that a clear and shared understanding of lifelong learning that includes all four of Delors' pillars is an essential ingredient for the establishment of a learning community. The community examined in this research that developed all four pillars, was engaged in a carefully structured approach to implementing a learning community that was research based, and promoted on-going support through external specialists and the development of networks with similar communities. In this community, objectives, goals and strategies were clearly defined and systematic accountability processes were in place. Therefore, to ensure the successful implementation of a learning community approach in a rural community a clear vision and structured implementation plan that incorporated strategies to address the pillars of *learning to be* and *learning to live together*, as well as *learning to know* and *learning to do* would be necessary. This vision and plan should be supported by members of the community and committed leadership.

Through this research, I have developed a knowledge and understanding of the factors driving the changes occurring in current society, particularly in rural communities. The economic and social impact of environmental issues and increasing

globalisation on rural communities is significant, but not impossible to address, as demonstrated by the communities examined by this research. This has convinced me, that as an educator, I need to be proactive in preparing my students and my school community for the rapidly emerging knowledge society and in developing strategies that will support them with the changes. Evidence from my research suggests that a learning community approach is a strategy that would effectively support a rural community in an emerging knowledge society.

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Appendix One

Interview Questions- Administrators, Teachers, Parents

The questions in this interview are designed to develop an understanding of your school community.

The same questions will be asked of all participants however, should terms need clarification this will be provided. Figure 1 explaining the terms; school community, extended school community and community will be discussed prior to the interview commencing.

1. Context:

The participant					
What is your role in the school?					
How long have you been involved with this school community?					
To what extent do you feel as if you are a part of the school community? Describe what makes you feel this way.					
The school					
How would you describe your school community? Consider: demographics, ethos, cohesion.					
What would you say are the most significant factors impacting on learning in your school community?					

2. Agreed objectives:

To what extent does the extended school community share common goals about learning?

- What are the key elements of these objectives?
- How were these objectives developed?
- Why were these objectives developed?

3. Partnerships:

To what extent does the extended school community have shared learning facilities?

- What community facilities does the school share?
 1. Physical
 2. Human resources
- What school facilities does the community share?
 1. Physical
 2. Human resources

4. Lifelong learning:

To what extent is learning promoted as a lifelong activity?

- What learning opportunities are available to extended school community members:
 1. To develop skills
 2. To develop knowledge
 3. To strengthen social regeneration/sense of community/community spirit
 4. To enhance personal development/personal health
- Who provides these learning opportunities?

