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Has Restructuring Left High School Teachers Professionally Stranded?

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Finally Lorenz indicates the relationships of the components of a weather system can only be expressed in nonlinear terms it would seem that teaching-learning relationships are also nonlinear. A constant importance cannot be assigned to one aspect of the relationship rather there is a twisted changeability between all of the elements which make up the teaching-learning system.

If this is correct of course then no amount of research designed to deduce the components of the teaching learning system and no amount of time spent in deducing the relationships or producing accurate measurements of those relationships will in the final analysis enable anyone to predict the future behaviour of the system.

This conclusion does not imply that CBTE is a poor training methodology. It may well be an excellent way of organising a teacher training program, however it cannot claim any predictive value for future success.

CONCLUSION

The work of Lorenz and other chaos theorists have had a profound influence in science, however the implications for other disciplines such as economics, social science, and psychology (which have used traditional scientific methodology) have not as yet been analysed. Essentially chaos theorists have told us that the behaviour of any system which is aperiodic and which is sensitive dependent on initial conditions cannot be predicted.

This paper suggests that the teaching/learning system is such a system and attempts to analyse this system in order to predict future performance of teachers-in-training cannot succeed. The CBTE movement uses the traditional scientific model and therefore the work of the chaos theorists must influence CBTE.

There are of course much wider implications produced by this revolution in science. All competency based training schemes may well have to be reassessed, in terms of their capacity to predict future performance. The impact of chaos theory may well be much greater in disciplines other than education. Its importance in the disciplines mentioned earlier should not be underestimated.

The most intriguing aspect of the work of the chaos theorists is that their investigations into unpredictability have revealed patterns in apparently random systems. What this means for other disciplines remains unexplored, however the new framework provided by the chaos theorists may well be one which in future may be more appropriate for researchers in disciplines which have until now used modern science as their methodological model.

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HAS RESTRUCTURING LEFT HIGH SCHOOL TEACHERS PROFESSIONALLY STRANDED?

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In February 1987 the 'Better Schools Report' was released in Western Australia. It provided the blueprint for a radical restructuring of the state education system based on the principles of administrative decentralization, devolution of authority, and corporate management. The proposed changes were designed to make schools more self-determining. They were also intended to make the delivery of education more responsive, flexible, and accountable. To those ends, the Ministry of Education's central office was streamlined, the nine regional offices were replaced by twenty nine district offices, principals were given responsibility for recommending the permanency of all new teachers, and a process was set in motion to provide schools progressively with consolidated cash grants for purchasing goods and services at their own discretion.

One criticism levelled at the new system is that it has seriously undermined provisions for the professional development and welfare of high school teachers. Previously, these people received support and direction from subject superintendents, advisory teachers, and curriculum specialists based at Head Office.¹ Restructuring dismantled those positions, allegedly leaving many teachers "professionally stranded."

The dissatisfaction was voiced in a variety of forums. Most of it centred on the removal of the subject superintendents. For example, at the 1987 June council meeting of the State School Teachers Union, an unsuccessful motion called for the re-establishment of the position of subject superintendent. During the debate it was claimed that the abolition of this position was a terrible error, that subject teachers had no one to turn to, and that there was a "need for someone to be overseeing the implementation of the Unit Curriculum" (*The Western Teacher*, 17 July, 1987:5). Similar sentiments were expressed at some subject association meetings throughout 1987. Outside of formal settings, a common cry among many high school teachers was, "Bring back our supers." Criticism of the changes extended beyond the education system. In its response to the Better Schools Report, the W.A. Liberal Party (1987) stated:

"The decision to down grade the role of subject superintendents in secondary schools is strongly opposed. These officers have played a significant role in assisting classroom teachers in the mastery of their subject area".

The 1988 Education Policy Statement of that party contains a promise to reinstate the position of subject superintendent.

More recently, a press article referred to teachers' "sense of isolation after the loss of subject superintendents" and "how the streamlining of the ministry

¹ Before restructuring the Ministry of Education was called the Department of Education and Central Office was called Head Office.

has left teachers and schools without support" (*Sunday Times*, 3 September, 1989:37).

On 11 September 1989, a senior high school principal sent a letter to all his colleagues in an attempt to identify problems and search for a solution to the teachers' strike which was occurring at that time. He suggested that among the factors responsible for the industrial dispute,

"an important element has been the loss of subject superintendents who provided a personal link between teachers and the Ministry. They provided a degree of personal assurance about the important structural aspects of lives - permanency, placement, and promotion The removal of this 'structural security' has meant that teachers now feel vulnerable."²

Although the letter was not intended as a survey, twenty five principals replied registering a strong feeling that the void needed to be filled in some way.

As a way of exploring the validity and implications of these criticisms, the authors of this article recently investigated, as a case study, the provision of professional support for high school English teachers before and after the Better Schools Report. In doing so, the term 'professional support' was used broadly, to refer to the provision of services and resources to meet the different types of work-related needs that teachers develop throughout their careers. Four questions were used to guide the study:

- * What functions did the English superintendents, advisory teachers and curriculum specialists perform?
- * How are those functions being fulfilled now?
- * Are there any gaps in current mechanisms for meeting the professional support needs of English teachers?
- * What options and issues arise in relation to closing any gaps?

Information related to those questions was gathered by conducting extensive interviews with twenty three past and present Ministry officials, district officers, schools principals, and English teachers. A first draft of the findings was then written and circulated to those interviewed and to a further thirty people for comment.³

In the final analysis it became apparent that while teachers acknowledged the wide level of support provided by Head Office, their 'sense of loss' was based predominantly on changes in the areas of staffing, subject leadership, and being personally valued. The servicing of other needs - such as those relating to selection, induction, appraisal, promotion, professional development, and curriculum materials - was seen to be covered under the new structure by arrangements that have the potential to match or surpass the standards set previously.

Before dealing with the areas of perceived loss in professional support, a brief account will be given of the areas of potential gain.

AREAS OF POTENTIAL GAIN

Selection

In the past the superintendents selected graduates for jobs. Compared with that system, the new approach is more in line with formal equal opportunity

² Original letter supplied in personal correspondence with the researchers.

³ The 53 people consisted of: 3 former English superintendents 5 former English curriculum officers and advisory teachers, 17 English teachers, 8 senior teachers of English, 5 senior high school principals, 3 tertiary academics who work closely with English teachers, 4 district office staff, and 8 Central Office staff.

requirements. All interviews are conducted now by two persons, a male and female, on the basis of a common schedule. This specifies the areas on which graduates may be questioned and determines the weightings allocated to their academic results, teaching marks, interview performance, and references. Previously, the format of the interview and ranking system were not subject to formal regulation and consequently could vary from superintendent to superintendent. The new system also allows practising teachers to participate in the decision making process; the two person panel consists of a Ministry staffing officer and a senior teacher of English. None of the fifty three respondents consulted in our study made complaints about this sphere of restructuring.

Induction

Prior to 1988, the superintendents took responsibility for induction. When visiting a school, they tried to give each beginning teacher at least 120 minutes of their time. Typically this involved meeting the teacher in the staffroom for a pre-lesson briefing session, collecting samples of pupils' work, observing a forty minute lesson, and then sitting down with the teacher to discuss the lesson, programmes, marking, performance targets for the next year's visit, expectations in relation to permanency, and other relevant matters.

In place of the superintendent's visit, the Ministry has introduced a school-based performance management programme of induction and appraisal for beginning teachers. It involves setting up, for each teacher, an advisory group that may comprise all or some of the following: the principal, deputy principal, senior teacher, and a person nominated by the beginning teacher. This group must develop an induction plan which addresses the needs of the teacher. Each semester it is expected to:

- * interview the teacher to establish goals and an induction plan
- * give regular informal feedback
- * conduct a second formal review interview to report progress and reassess the induction and appraisal process
- * conduct an appraisal interview in conjunction with a written report - this entails examining the teacher's strengths and weaknesses and designing strategies for the next semester.

In principle, the new performance management programme offers a more comprehensive and ongoing form of induction than that provided by the subject superintendents. In most cases, all that the superintendents could do for a struggling beginner was notify the senior teacher and principal and leave the matter with them or, more rarely, transfer the teacher at the end of the year to a school where more professional support was available. As a bare minimum, the current approach requires each first-year-out teacher to:

- * confer with her/his advisory group six times
- * be formally observed teaching on two occasions
- * receive formal and informal feedback regularly from members of the advisory group
- * receive and discuss copies of two written reports or performance appraisal forms.

Virtually everyone interviewed, however, said that a lot more work and resources were required before the potential benefits of the school-based performance management programme could be achieved.

Permanency

Until 1987, subject superintendents recommended which probationary teachers should be granted permanency. They did so, largely on the basis of a single two-hour visit during the teacher's second year of service. The format

on these occasions was similar to that for beginning teachers except that at the end of the day the superintendent was required to judge whether the teacher had passed probation. When making an assessment, the superintendent checked that the advice given twelve months earlier had been acted on and took into account the views of the principal and the senior teacher of English in the school. It was commonly understood and accepted that the superintendents' recommendations were not subject to appeal.

Following the publication of the Better Schools Report in 1987, principals were required to take over the role of recommending permanency. In discharging their new responsibility, principals are expected to confer with a performance management advisory group which may consist of all or some of the following: a deputy principal, the senior teacher of English, and a person nominated by the probationary teacher. Together with this group and the teacher being assessed, the principal formulates an induction and appraisal plan along similar lines to the one developed for first-year-out teachers. During the final semester of the probationary period, the principal makes a recommendation concerning permanency. In the event of a negative report, the district superintendent (or nominee) visits the school, reviews the situation, and recommends either permanency, termination, or a two term extension of the probationary period. If an extension is granted, further induction and appraisal occurs, at the end of which the principal again recommends whether permanency be granted or denied. When the latter occurs, the district superintendent is left to make a final decision. No further extensions of probation are granted beyond that stage.

The structure of the new system is such that permanency can be determined on the basis of more observations, in more settings (classroom, staffrooms, community), by more people, with more pre- and post-observation conferences, and with more remediation between observations, than was possible by a single two-hour superintendent's visit. So far the new method of determining permanency seems to be perceived by teachers as no less threatening, but as more valid and reliable, than the previous one.

Promotion

In the days of promotion by seniority and formal qualifications, the staffing branch selected senior teachers within a strict set of guidelines; the superintendents only became involved when an applicant had an adverse report - their role was to determine whether the report was still 'live'. After special secondary promotion was introduced in 1979, the superintendents had to report on the performance of applicants for senior teacher positions. One view is that they had little say in the selection and placement of new senior teachers. That being the case, the removal of the superintendents would have had virtually no impact on the process of promotion.

An alternative view is that the superintendents did have a say, in fact the controlling say, in who became senior teachers of English, even before special secondary promotion. In the words of one principal,

"By writing a glowing recommendation, the superintendents could override the seniority factor. Twelve years of teaching was seen as good as fifteen years and therefore who had the superintendents' support, won."

A related view is that within the merit promotion system, the superintendent's report not only outweighed all others, but that that was a good thing. Because of their perceived professional integrity and the fact that they were the only ones who saw large numbers of English teachers in action across the state, the superintendents were regarded as best equipped to rank teachers on merit. Their removal has created an impression that teachers are not being evaluated on the basis of a common measuring stick and that the determining say in the

selection process is held by people who have no first hand knowledge of the applicants' professional competencies.

Despite this perception, no one seriously argued that recent rounds of promotion have resulted in more significant inequities than occurred previously. Also, within the current merit promotion system the power of selection is seen to be distributed more broadly than was the case where one person may have had the overriding say.

Taking all factors into account, it is difficult to assess whether the level of dissatisfaction with aspects of the merit promotion ranking, reference, and selection system would have been any different had the superintendents remained.

Teacher Support Material

Before restructuring, Central Office employed a range of curriculum specialists. The number appointed as secondary English specialists varied from time to time, but there were normally at least two. The positions were filled on a rotating basis, usually by respected senior teachers of English who returned to their schools at the end of two years. Their task was essentially two-fold: to produce teacher support materials and to co-ordinate professional development activities for secondary English teachers.

Restructuring abolished all permanent curriculum specialist positions and established a Curriculum Programmes Branch. Under the new system, education officers are employed on a short term project basis to develop materials and in-service strategies in response to specific priorities. What this means in practice is that curriculum specialists of the Better Schools type are not employed in a subject area unless a particular problem or need for development in that area is identified. They are appointed only for the term of a specific task, and the length and nature of their contracts can vary considerably.

So far English has benefited from the new structure. During the past two years, English teachers have received proportionately more curriculum support material than they did in the years prior to 1987. Apparently the same can not be said for some other subjects. As an area of perennial public concern English can expect to receive more assistance than other subjects from a system organised according to priorities rather than a standard base level of support.

Inservice Courses

Prior to restructuring the English curriculum specialists were responsible for organising a range of 1-2 day regional inservice courses each year. They did so in consultation with the superintendents and the Education Department's Teacher Development Branch. These courses were not intended for large numbers of teachers. Rather, it was expected that one or two teachers from each school would attend, return to their schools and inservice other members of their staff. Most senior teachers of English went to no more than a one day centrally organised inservice course every two years; ordinary classroom teachers attended even less. A superintendent explained:

"More could have been done in the past, but the schools themselves asked for a reduction because of the impact of 'in school time' courses on the teaching programme. 'Out of school' time ran into Union opposition."

Restructuring wound down the presence of subject expertise at the Ministry to the point where very few centrally organised inservice courses are offered. Instead, formal responsibility for the professional development of English teachers now resides within the school, and control over the content and delivery of inservice courses lies in the hands of classroom teachers. Furthermore, most of the money set aside for the professional development

of teachers has been given to the schools. Consequently, the new system provides an opportunity for entrepreneurial staff to organise for themselves more inservice training than they received before. It also allows for professional development programmes that are more responsive to the differing needs of individual teachers and English departments than was the case previously. For example, between June 1988 and June 1989, at one metropolitan senior high school with ten English teachers, the senior teacher obtained funding from his school for the following set of professional development activities:

- * a one day course for three teachers of Year 11 and 12 English
- * a one day course for all ten teachers, on the unit curriculum
- * two half days for three teachers of academic extension classes to visit another school in order to observe and compare notes with other teachers
- * attendance at the two day English Teachers Association conference, for the equivalent of one and half teachers
- * a ten week after-hours drama course (cost \$60) for one teacher
- * a one day course for six teachers of English Focus units.

Overall, this list adds up to and averages out at about two and half days of inservice courses for each of the ten teachers in the school over a period of twelve months.

AREAS OF PERCEIVED LOSS

Placement

Before the Better Schools Report, the English superintendents placed and transferred teachers under their charge. In doing so, they were well situated to match teachers with schools. Part of their work involved visiting every state high school each year to make personal contact with the 750 or so English teachers employed in the government system. The nature of the contact varied. Often they were able to observe a teacher take a full lesson, or a segment of one. Sometimes they simply talked with a teacher in the staffroom on a range of professional and personal matters.

Over the years, the information accumulated during schools visits provided the superintendents with an opportunity to develop a wide knowledge of the interests, skills, and characteristics of many English teachers in the state system; it also gave them a chance to become familiar with the needs of different school communities and with the personalities, ideologies, and leadership styles of principals and senior teachers of English. As a result, the superintendents often knew how to match teachers with communities so that, for instance, 'appropriate' people would be sent to a mining town. They often knew how to match teachers with teachers so that within a particular school the English staff would intermesh and function as a team. They often knew how to match teachers with schools so that, for example, a school wanting help with drama productions could be provided with a teacher who had strengths in that area; or a school with a flagging English department could be sent some inspirational teachers; or a principal with a strongly authoritarian style could be sent a teacher with whom s/he would not clash.

Since the Better Schools Report, placements have been made by secondary staffing officers who are recruited from the ranks of teachers and appointed for a renewable term of three years. Unlike the subject superintendents, the staffing officers do not visit schools to meet and observe teachers in action. Consequently, information about the needs, characteristics, and resources of schools, communities, teachers, and departments of English is received, processed, and acted on by people who do not have an annually renewed

experiential understanding of the local context to which it applies. That increases the difficulty of achieving a reasonable harmony between the strengths and personal qualities of the teachers and the needs of the schools to which they are appointed.

Several courses of action can be suggested with regard to the present system of placing teachers. One is to let the system continue unchanged and strengthen the schools' capacity to manage 'mismatches'. For example principals, deputies, senior teachers, and teachers themselves could be given training to strengthen their conflict resolution, consensus reaching, and team building skills. Another option involves increasing the staffing officers' capacity to achieve a 'reasonable match'; arrangements could be made to enable staffing officers to visit schools more often to find out first hand what the needs and strengths of teachers and schools are. A third option is to take staffing out of Central Office and put it in the schools, as the N.S.W. Ministry intends to do. In that state, according to the 'School Renewal Report',

"teachers should be selected by the principal in association with a senior regional officer on the basis of merit, with appropriate skills and experience as well as assessment reports being considered. Appeals should be considered only on grounds of due process" (1989:12).

Subject Leadership

A less tangible, but nevertheless important source of professional support for teachers is derived from a sense of belonging to a valued 'club'. In a variety of ways, English teachers come to feel that they are different from other teachers and that they are members of a distinct community or profession of English teachers. When that club, community, or profession occupies a position of high status and strength in the broader educational world, English teachers feel reassured. When it is weakened or threatened, they feel vulnerable - they feel their support base, career opportunities, professional identity, and 'spiritual home' are at risk.

Before 1987, the superintendents, curriculum specialists, advisory teachers and other subject-associated staff⁴ were well placed to foster the health and vitality of the English teaching profession and provide teachers with intellectual leadership. It was accepted that their work involved keeping abreast of new developments, reading recent publications, discussing ideas with tertiary academics, meeting with visiting overseas and interstate specialists, writing journal articles, attending conferences, occupying prominent positions on syllabus committees and professional associations, producing curriculum support materials, running professional development courses, visiting schools, and inducting and professionally assisting senior teachers. For example:

"We were a kind of community of senior masters led by the superintendents. There was a feeling that they represented us in there and were an intermediary between us and the Ministry.

"The superintendents did the professional reading that we (senior teachers) didn't have time for. They gave us the impression they had the overview and that their decisions were not ad hoc but there was a direction, a purpose to the changes."

"The English superintendents led the development of English in the State. One went to London University and did his masters' degree there. He and another superintendent introduced new ideas, focused attention on ideas, disseminated ideas. They were not just bureaucrats. They kept saying, 'Here's a way of looking at English, here's a way of approaching the subject.' That's an important role. They had that role. They were

⁴ The other subject-associated staff included media, speech and drama specialists, primary language specialists, and curriculum officers working in related areas such as the Language and Learning Project.

concerned. They trowled for new ideas, new directions. That really happened. They were not just superintending and interviewing staff. A lot of their ideas sprang from the Bullock report in England. They sprang from a research base of what happens when kids learn language. They were not just ideas that fitted in with accountability, with an organisational base, with programmable, neatly packaged units." (A senior teacher)

The nearest equivalent within the restructured Ministry to either the superintendent of English or the English curriculum specialist is the consultant for English, a position with a three year tenure which was created in 1988. The work attached to that position is carried out by one person. The consultant's main roles are:

- * to provide advice to teachers and the community on Ministry policies in the area of English
- * to provide advice to other Ministry officers which can help determine Ministry policy in English and related areas.

Unlike the superintendents, however, the English consultant has no power over staffing, is required to spend more time at Central Office than in the schools, and is not expected to be the 'philosopher king' or 'political leader' of English within the state system.

The events of the past five years raise the following issues. Is it necessary for someone in Central Office to provide strong intellectual leadership over the nature and development of subject English? Has restructuring reduced or enhanced the English teaching community's capacity to exercise control over its own profession? How has restructuring affected opportunities for innovation in English teaching?

Defending the Empire

Periodically, the position of the English teaching profession in the broader educational world is buffeted by conflicts of opinion, competition for scarce resources, and power struggles. When such occasions arose in the past, the English superintendents fought to promote and protect the interests of their staff. They defended English teachers against public attacks over allegedly declining literacy standards and the selection of controversial novels. They intervened when English teachers were subjected to pressure from other staff opposed to initiatives such as 'language across the curriculum' and 'uninterrupted sustained silent reading'. And they battled for books, equipment, inservice courses, and other resources for their teachers when money was divided up in the Ministry. In effect, they were not 'empire builders' so much as 'empire defenders' and 'empire enhancers'. Their departure has left many teachers feeling that:

"We have no one to fight our case any more."

"There is no one to fight for our subject area."

"The superintendents always came across as being subject-supportive. We knew someone in the Ministry was protecting our patch. Now, there is no one who can speak with authority. No one has the full picture any more."

A key issue here is this - at what point does supporting the interests of the English teaching community conflict with promoting the interests of an individual school community? A number of comments were made to indicate that the leadership and authority of some principals, and the autonomy of their schools, were compromised by the existence of superintendents (of all subjects):

"Subject supers tended to be considered as the ultimate authorities by senior masters and this cut across total school development."

"The senior masters used to have dual loyalties. They were responsible

to the principals on the inside and responsible to the superintendent on the outside. It created complications for principals trying to improve structures. In the early 1980's they complained about the senior masters resisting change, being robber barons."

"Now and again a principal might say, 'I want everyone to do an exam at the end of the year,' and a senior master might say, 'My superintendent says there are to be no exams in my subject because it interferes with creativity.'"

"The principal timetabled English teachers to teach social studies and vice versa. I (the senior teacher of English) had to prepare and help social studies teachers assigned to teach English. It was intolerable. I would ring up the superintendents and complain about the principal, about his intransigence."

A variety of other issues are related to the potential for conflict between Central Office leadership of the English teaching community and individual school autonomy. For example: Is a high school more than the sum of its subject departments? Do strong subject departments enhance or hinder the development of self-determining schools? To what extent is an English teacher more than just a teacher of English? How much should English teachers depend, for their effectiveness, on the existence of strong English departments in schools and a strong statewide community of English teachers?

Making Teachers Feel Personally Valued by Their Employer

"In a sense, subject teaching is being devalued. The focus is on teachers as teachers, not subject teachers. There is no one to represent English and English teachers, just a massive bureaucracy who don't care."

"Removing the superintendents hasn't made much difference except they made me feel I was a person in the Department because I could phone them if I wanted a transfer. They were nice people. If there was an issue such as a curriculum change, I could get the senior master to contact the superintendent to find out what was going on. I wouldn't know who to contact now. I would just talk to a clerk who wasn't trained and I wouldn't get the same person again. I feel totally detached and set adrift now, just a number."

"The most powerful element was the perception that the superintendent had an eye on your career, that someone personally knew you."

"A huge gap was created by the absence of the superintendent and the personalised perception teachers had that there was a person whom they could talk to in confidence, a person to talk to about their career structure, a confidant to give objectivity to their school situation independent of the principal and deputy, someone who was trusted."

"The human face of the Ministry was taken into the schools in the person of the superintendent and was identified with a real, caring person."

"The most common reaction after the Better Schools Report was, 'nobody cares', and the nature of the Ministry would have you believe that nobody cares, and that is because sometimes nobody does care."

"The English superintendents were like relatives - uncles and aunts; there was a close bond."

Clearly, the English superintendents made many English teachers feel that the Ministry understood their situation, knew them personally, and valued their subject and work. No one within the new structure is in a position to perform that function with the same effect. No one from Central Office can visit as many English teachers every year and talk to them, acknowledge and applaud their efforts, take an active interest in their career path, and offer a sympathetic ear to any private matter they care to raise. No one from the

Central Office can establish a long term, ongoing professional relationship with English teachers.

It was not just that the superintendents made personal contact with a large number of English teachers every year; they also presided over a teacher's career at each step along the way. They effectively selected, placed, inducted, appraised, transferred and, arguably, promoted teachers. Because the same persons handled all those functions, teachers had a chance to develop a sense of stability, security, continuity, meaning, and being cared for. Since 1988, that has changed. Each function may be performed now by different people, many of whom do not personally know the teachers nor are personally known by the teachers.

The feeling of being uncared for would not matter if the Ministry was of little consequence. However, despite decentralization and devolution, it has continued to occupy a significant place in the careers and consciousness of classroom teachers. Central Office still hires, fires, places, promotes, and transfers teachers. Central Office still sets curriculum frameworks and provides key teacher support material. Central Office still controls the distribution of information through publications such as *Education News*, *The Education Circular*, the *Unit Curriculum Newsletter*, and occasional memoranda. Central Office still houses the Minister for Education and negotiates with the teachers' union. Central Office still employs the most powerful, prestigious, and highly paid people in the state education system. And Central Office still has a prominent public profile because it receives the lion's share of media coverage on educational matters.

The feeling of being valued is linked also with a person's occupational identity. That means taking into account the professional socialisation that English teachers experience from the beginning of their training. Before their initial appointment, English teachers undergo at least three, and often four years of higher education, specialising in English studies and English curriculum studies. During those years they are institutionally categorised and treated as 'English' students; they invest a lot of time, effort and money acquiring the skills, knowledge and perspectives of English; they are taught by academics who are strong believers in the importance of English; and they are supervised on 'prac' by teachers whose careers are built on English.

Upon taking up an appointment at a school, English graduates are normally housed in an English department. This means sharing an office with experienced English teachers, developing a working relationship with them, and calling on their expertise in times of need. From there, they move into the ranks of the permanent staff, teach English on a daily basis, are expected to remain faithful to that subject, and are professionally nourished by material from English syllabus committees and TEE boards of examiners.

As a result of all these experiences and expectations, English teachers become immersed in the culture of their subject and the teaching of it. Over time they internalise that culture and develop a deep loyalty, commitment, and emotional attachment to English. In large measure, their professional identity and self concept, particularly in the work situation, is bound up with the subject they teach. Not surprisingly they become personally affected by the way it is treated by significant people and organisations in their lives.

Because of the superintendents, many English teachers felt that the Ministry cared for their subject and that their subject was being cared for at the Ministry. The removal of the superintendents made these teachers feel that Central Office had lost interest in English and therefore in them. These feelings would be less enduring if the Better Schools reforms had dismantled the structural bases of English teachers' professional identities. However, the subject-centred curriculum of schools, training colleges, external examination programmes, and universities has remained intact.

There are some issues here. Is it a legitimate expectation of teachers that someone in the Ministry should value and appreciate them personally? Are teachers' feelings on this matter likely to disappear with time or are they based on enduring needs that should be accommodated? Will new teachers develop a similar set of feelings? Perhaps only time will tell. What can be noted here, however, is that these issues are less pressing for private school teachers and government school primary teachers than they are for high school subject specialists.

CLOSING COMMENTS

This article set out to examine the validity and implications of the claim that radically restructuring the Western Australian education system has left teachers "professionally stranded." It is not possible to weigh the areas of potential gain against the areas of perceived loss and declare one to be more significant than the other.

What can be pointed out is that the reforms ushered in by the Better Schools Report have created more opportunities for an enhanced level of professional support than some critics seem to acknowledge. What can also be pointed out is that to capitalize on these opportunities, teachers will need to accept responsibility for their own professional development and destiny. At one level that means the professional associations exercising more intellectual and industrial leadership. At another level it means subject departments within each school organising programmes of self-renewal.

If schools are to become self-determining then it is important that teachers place more value on being cared for by their local

school communities than by the Ministry. That can not occur in a structure which allows teachers to appeal to a subject superintendent for a ruling that conflicts with what a school sees as representing its best interests, or which allows teachers' professional identities and loyalties to become bound more to their subject and superintendent than to their schools and principal.

Finally, this article has focussed on the effects of restructuring on the provision of professional support for English teachers. Change such as this is difficult to describe. It is not the product of easily isolatable factors. While the reforms introduced by the Better Schools Report were being implemented, other changes were also occurring. Those which affected English teachers were:

- * the introduction of a new Year 8-10 English syllabus
- * the introduction of new English, English Literature, and Senior English syllabuses in Years 11 and 12
- * the implementation of the Unit Curriculum
- * the departure of a number of highly placed and well-known people from the Ministry of Education
- * a decline in the salary relativities of teachers
- * a decline in the growth rate of public expenditure on education.

Many of the effects on professional support attributed by teachers to the Better Schools Report are the result of, or at least complicated by, other factors. Just as importantly, teachers' attitudes to changes brought about by restructuring are often strongly affected by the simultaneous occurrence of these other factors. It has not been possible in this article to extricate the impact of all the factors and changes being referred to here. That may not matter; their influence is part of the real world in which the Better Schools Report has had to operate.

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POLITICAL EDUCATION IN AUSTRALIA 'WELL-BEING' FOR YOUTH

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Interest in political socialisation and education, and the agencies through which it occurs, can be traced back to the beginnings of political theory. Much of Plato's Republic was devoted to the proper training patterns of various 'classes' in his ideal state. He reasoned that if political socialisation or civic training was defective a political system would inevitably degenerate through timocracy, oligarchy, and democracy to tyranny (Phillips and Rielly, 1982, 24). Aristotle, as Plato's outstanding student, took it for granted that the legislator should make the political education of the young a major goal. To ensure the stability of the Constitution, which to Aristotle meant not only the framework of government but a way of life, citizens had to be educated to what he called eudaimonia. The translation of happiness is slightly misleading. Well-being and similar words are often more accurate. The aim of ethics and also politics was to show people how to achieve eudaimonia. To live such a life people needed to be active, spirited, believe in what they are doing, have due self-esteem and proper respect for themselves and others (Stocker and Langtry, 1986, 26).

Today we share Aristotle's concern about the political education of our nation's youth. However, our focus is much broader than what Aristotle envisaged. The agenda encompasses youth from all 'classes', from both sexes, and all states of the Australian polity. Aristotle, too, had reservations about a democratic form of government which he regarded as a perverted (or wrong) form of rule by the many. Most Australians, though, think that democracy is a 'good word' which should be an element of the 'spirit' of our Constitution. This does not mean to say that the majority of Australians could articulate a clear understanding of what is meant by democracy. Professor Hugh Emy, a leading political scientist, recently complained that even many of his university students 'could not provide a reasoned defence of the values and principles on which our kind of liberal democracy is based.' Emy has found that

'very few students can tell you why the Constitution, Parliament or elections are important, or why ideas about participation and citizenship deserve to be taken seriously.....' (Cited in, Education for Active Citizenship: A Discussion Paper, 1988, 3)¹.

Many educators have expressed concern about the lack of political education for young Australians. Researchers have documented an absence of an acceptable rating of what has more recently been labelled 'political literacy'. This is not a test for the right to vote as J.S. Mill had advocated but 'a compound of knowledge, skills and attitudes which involves both some

¹ Of course Emy is aware of the many theories of democracy. See Wringe, C. (1984), p. 18. Wringe claims 'that democracies have at least one thing in common: that in some sense of the term the good of the people is supposed to be the prime purpose for which the state and other institutions exist'.