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RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT AS AN ESSENTIAL WORK PRACTICE FOR TEACHERS.

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CHANGING VIEWS OF WORK AND LEARNING:

Educators who have promoted the societal value of life-long learning must take heart from the growing acceptance by business and industry leaders that career-long education and development is essential for their survival. This dawning realisation has been prompted by the harsh realities of competitive, global economics. Increasingly business leaders recognise that managers and employees must learn and adapt or contract and shut down. Ironically, much of the tough language of business and industry in regard to essential learnings and understandings (competencies) can be found in documented debate, system reports and teacher discourse of the seventies, a discourse labelled 'soft' by those who placed their faith in a narrow, fundamentalist, core skills approach to school education and training. Though sputterings of "back to the basics!" are still heard from time to time, these views are held by a conservative (albeit still powerful) minority.

Futurists, such as Senge (1990), and organisational theorists, such as Handy (1985), have convinced business and union leaders, and progressively those who work on the shop floor, that current work practices must change, and change quickly, if industries are to survive without protection in an international marketplace. But change from what? McKinnon (1991) identifies six salient features of contemporary work organisation:

1. an external source of control over work and the conditions of work;
2. fragmentation of the productive labour process with a social and technical division of labour;
3. extrinsic rewards for work in the form of wages and bonuses;
4. an uneven reward structure based on competitive rather than co-operative principles;
5. submissiveness and conformity required by a typically authoritarian organisation of work and an acceptance of a secondary role for

human labour which is being replaced by machines; and

6. a hierarchically organised workplace based on chains of command which are, in their turn, dependent upon differentials in authority, expertise and status.

These features are characteristic not only of business and industry worksites but also of schools. McKinnon (1991) draws the parallels by describing the organisation of teaching and learning in typical Australian schools -

1. control over the learning process is vested with the teacher and not the student;
2. the learning process is fragmented socially through streaming, and technically through compartmentalisation of school subjects;
3. the rewards for work and achievement are extrinsic and take the form of marks, grades, certificates, position in class, prizes and teacher approval;
4. the reward structure is uneven and is based on competition rather than co-operation so that success for some means failure for others (In schools co-operation is often regarded as cheating);
5. rule conformity is highly valued as the normative basis of learning and schoolwork; and
6. school organisation is hierarchical and characterised by superordinate/subordinate relations between teachers and students, administrators and teachers, and between high status and low status subjects.

While critics, such as McKinnon, are able to document the work organisation architecture as it presently exists they are more hesitant in prescribing what form it should take in the future. Some of the recipes concocted by experts from the private sector seem glib to reform-hardened teachers. However, there are some common threads in the organisation restructuring literature

to which more and more teachers are receptive. At the heart of the 'new' form of work organisation is the concept of self-managing work groups whose members are collectively responsible for their own planning, production and performance. This form of work organisations requires teamwork which is co-operative, informal, based on a shared 'mission' and motivated by self-determination. Leadership in such organisations, is focused on co-ordination and facilitation rather than supervision.

How the notion of self-managing work groups can be translated from an industrial worksite to a school setting is an important and unanswered question. This question pre-supposes another: Should schools recast their work organisation? What is wrong with existing forms of work organisation and practice? It does not automatically follow that given the parlous state of Australian business and industry that schools should mimic a form of work organisation found suitable for car manufacturing or fruit canning. Maybe schools are better organised along hierarchical, fragmented lines with conformity and submissiveness highly valued? That would be so if we wanted conforming and submissive teachers, guiding students reluctantly through a fragmented and increasingly irrelevant curriculum. Schools must change in order to give students and teachers a 'fair deal', to provide the conditions necessary for the kind of learning required of young people in the years ahead. The changes must be carefully considered rather than generated as a knee-jerk response to industry. The self-managing team concept provides a vehicle for reshaping schools in the collective interests of teachers and students.

Translating the concept of self-managing teams into a school setting is easier said than done. There is no guide book. The starting point must begin with questioning.

- How can teachers integrate essential learnings and understandings into curriculum and assessment?
- How can teachers provide for contextual learning, rather than abstract, bookish learning?
- How can teachers create direct links between this pedagogy and work organisation and produce structures which enable them to model team work, and research and development as a basic work practice.
- How are the industrial rights and responsibilities of all parties protected? What are the necessary regulatory frameworks?

EXAMPLES OF REFORM BASED ON TEACHERS' OWN LEARNING

Holt High School: A Professional Development School

'Authentic reform', that is reform that is deep-seated in the organisation, such reform must be based on teachers' own learning. To illustrate this contention, two examples will be described: the Professional Development School Partnership and the National Schools Project.

The Professional Development School Partnership in Michigan enables teachers and teacher educators to work together, as equals, in order to 'reinvent' schools for the 21st century. Underpinning the partnership is the proposition that the knowledge and understandings derived from research, combined with the craft knowledge derived from practice, provide a more powerful basis for reform than either body of expert knowledge considered is isolation.

The Partnership, arising from the Holmes Group report *Tomorrow's Schools*, is seeking to create new kinds of institutions - exemplary schools in which university and school teachers can collaboratively develop forms of teaching and learning that model to prospective teachers the best of practice. These institutions, known as Professional Development Schools, may provide an environment that until now that has been too difficult to produce because of bureaucratic, fiscal and cultural constraints.

There are six principles that guide the activities of Professional Development Schools (Holmes Group, 1990).

- Teach for understanding so that students learn for a lifetime;
- Organise the school and its classrooms as a community of learners;
- Hold these ambitious learning goals for everybody's children;
- Teach adults as well as children;
- Make reflection and inquiry a central feature of the school; and
- Invent a new organisational structure for the school.

To provide a sense of how this partnership works in reality I will relate two anecdotes from a visit to Holt High School in January 1992. Holt High

school has a re-structured week where for three hours each Wednesday morning there are no students. Rather, the time is set aside to provide for teachers' learning. Each teacher chooses to participate in seminars that extend across a number of weeks during the course of a semester. The seminar I attended was "Teaching for Conceptual Understanding". A panel of teachers presented an analysis of their own work and the impediments they faced as a result of school organisation in their efforts to put the six principles into practice.

The story of the constraints imposed by the school's exam timetable, told by a young maths teacher, was startling. He had constructed his exams for two years on the basis of problems which were presented to groups of students. The student teams were required over the course of several days to research, organise and present their responses, both in writing and orally, to a panel of teacher examiners, only one of whom was a maths teacher. The fact that he was to be allocated a two-hour slot on the exam timetable had enormous implications for his pedagogy. The power of the discussion that ensued meant that the vital links between teachers' control over their work and school organisation were exposed and discussed with the result that the problem was then resolved by a group established to overcome structural impediments. By providing for their own learning, in partnership with teacher educators, teachers at Holt High School could ensure authentic restructuring, that is reform which genuinely emanated from an examination of teaching and learning.

I was anxious to understand the nature and extent of the impact of the partnership and decided to talk to both the union representative and the principal. The union spokesperson responded by indicating that three years ago the four or five protagonists behind any school development proposal stood out amongst the staff whereas now, in a voluntary program of inquiry, the four or five non-participants stood out.

Holt High School had a long history of innovation. But the initiatives were leader-initiated and did not significantly impact on the important teaching and learning interactions between students and teachers. According to the principal, participation as a professional development school for the past three years has led to fundamental change in the practice of teachers: assessment procedures changing, covering less content but developing depth and conceptual understanding, inclusion of all students in 'high expectation classes', students learning in teams and groups, teachers facilitating instead of lecturing, and teachers reflecting about

and conducting research on their own craft. These improvements were enabled by changes to the work organisation and culture of the school. The key facets which enabled this to happen according to the school (Davis, 1992) were:

1. **Accountability:** Teachers and administrators became formally accountable to other professionals and each other.
2. **Time:** The paradigm of teachers not being at work unless they are with children has been abandoned and 'company time' has been provided to enable collaboration, research and reflection.
3. **Third Party Thinkers:** The university personnel assigned to the school brought new perspectives, challenging indelible notions of school organisation, curriculum and teaching and learning. Teachers and students became reflective researchers in their own right rather than passive consumers of others' research.
4. **Control:** The professionals took charge of the teaching and learning concerns of the school.
5. **Community of Learners:** The partners in the venture were working hard to emulate a true learning community of adult professionals. The synergy of the learning community changed the roles and relationships of all the people associated with the school.

Holt High School is only one of many Professional Development Schools in the United States. Not all such schools may report such substantial progress. The key to Holt High School's achievements lies in the disposition of its staff to inquire, reflect and learn.

The National Schools Project:

The National Schools Project (NSP) emerged as one of the major areas of research and development being sponsored by The National Project on the Quality of Teaching and Learning (NPQTL), a collaborative project between the Commonwealth, education systems and the teacher unions. The National Schools Project has the sub-title 'Rethinking Schools For A Changing World'.

Teachers participating in the National Schools Project have been encouraged to investigate the nature of their work and to develop, implement and evaluate initiatives designed to enhance learning outcomes for students. The Project was designed to identify the link between students'

learning and teachers' work (the way the work is organised and the nature of the work itself).

Although the overarching parameters for the Project were established by the Project partners and applied nationally each state and territory has its own implementation structures. This makes sense since the administration of education is a state responsibility. The states, for the most part, control the regulatory framework for school systems. Hence, the states have interpreted the Project and its guidelines with a measure of idiosyncrasy and, sometimes, self-interest.

The National Schools Project is based on the assumption that if schools are to effectively meet the needs of students in a rapidly changing world, work organisation reforms need to be made. In particular, the Project is critically interested in investigating how the concept of the 'self-managing team' (or 'systems work unit', to use jargon of the Project) can be applied to the education 'industry'.

The answer to this question is unlikely to be found by employing a team of experts to undertake research on teachers and schools; nor is the extensive management literature likely to contain the answer. Knowledge produced by these means has sometimes been found useful by teachers as a springboard for action, but usually the initiative peters out. The National Schools Project assumes that teachers, in partnership with outside researchers, can develop a knowledge base which supports authentic restructuring, but it will be knowledge accumulated from relentless questioning, reflection and review of progress.

Essential to the Project are the principles on which it is based. They are:

1. Acceptance that the school has the primary responsibility for improving learning outcomes for students. This will necessitate a commitment to examine and detail the requirements associated with models of curriculum which make student outcomes or competencies explicit.
2. A commitment to greater participation of students in the learning process.
3. A willingness to examine current work organisation in order to identify good practice and impediments to effective teaching and/or effective management of the teaching/learning process.

4. A willingness to develop and model participative workplace procedures. This will require:

- an agreement by the principal and the school community to develop forms of work organisation designed to improve student learning outcomes which are characterised by appropriate decision making by the staff;
 - participation of all staff and the community in the development of objectives of the school and how they are achieved;
 - collaborative problem solving amongst staff;
 - monitoring by staff of progress towards the achievement of objectives, and
 - evaluation of the outcomes as an essential tool for review and redesign.
5. An understanding that those in the school will be involved in negotiating goals and objectives, developing strategies to carry out the work, monitoring progress, modifying strategies and evaluating outcomes.
6. An understanding and acceptance of the industrial rights and responsibilities of all parties.

It is still too early to draw any firm conclusions about the efficacy of the National Schools Project. Some schools are still clarifying the nature of the changes that they want to introduce. Preliminary evaluations (Connors, 1993) are positive. There is no doubt that many of the pilot schools have begun to develop a culture of inquiry, similar in many respects to Holt High School. There are some also that have found the going tough; it is not clear whether they will be able to break out of their current mode of operation. However, in the schools that have made these break-throughs, often with the support of critical friends from outside their institution, there is a decided optimism that things will change for the better.

If authentic reform depends upon teacher learning (and patently it does) then structures to support teachers learning must be incorporated into the working week. This is a lesson already evident in successful school reform movements (few as they maybe). Sizer (1989), with reference to the Coalition of Essential Schools, comments:

Re-designing a school is one thing; The re-shaping or re-training of its faculty is quite another. Teacher development is critical and must be ongoing. The

traditional one shot, two or three times a year, staff development days are a mockery compared with the work required for the re-direction of teachers and administrators responsibilities that serious restructuring requires. (p.5)

Teachers as Learners:

Most teachers in today's classrooms can describe a lifetime of reforms, one stacked on the other, few, if any, appearing to have any consequence for their professional lives. In more recent times, a multiplicity of reforms has been generated from outside the school, steeped in managerialism, bereft of structures which allow teacher discourse, and only distantly related to the purposes of schools - teaching and learning. The attitude of the profession to change has been shaped by the sheer, cumulative impact of multiple, complex and non-negotiable innovations, demanding teachers time, their energy, their motivation, their opportunity to reflect and even their very capacity to cope (Hargreaves, 1992).

One simple reason why teachers have been subjected to this form of 'restructuring' is that we are unclear about a viable alternative. Education systems are managed this way because central authorities know no other way. Even benign school system administration, determined to remove obstacles to 'best practice' fall short of the mark. As Bamburg and Medina (1992) observe:

Many reform policies focus on removing or buffering constraints to effective practice, that is, inadequate materials, lack of appropriate teacher preparation, or insufficient teacher voice in curriculum decisions. However, an important lesson of the past decade is that removing constraints or obstacles does not by itself ensure more effective practice. Other and often different factors are required to enable practice. In addition the factors that enable practice - productive collegial relations, organisational structures that promote open communication and feedback and leadership that 'manages' opportunities for professional growth and nurtures norms of individual development, for example - are not amenable to direct policy fixes because they do not operate singly or consistently across settings. (p.4)

What is required is a change in the culture of our profession. We know that change will be a constant in the wider world but also in our professional lives. When we close our classroom doors on the world outside we are stating, in effect, that we as professionals can segment ourselves from the rest of society. For a while, perhaps we can, but the pressure will mount until outsiders demand another burst of restructuring.

Holt High School, and the many schools in the National Schools Project, have decided to be proactive, and take control rather than wait for 'school improvement by central formula'. To follow this route requires teachers to assume responsibility for their own learning. Schools must become sites for such learning, places where current orthodoxies are questioned, intelligent modifications to work organisation and pedagogy are trialled, and the net benefit of these modifications assessed by the people who initiated them and who must live with the consequences. For this to happen research and development must become an essential work practice for teachers.

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PARTNERSHIP : BEYOND CONSULTATION

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Introduction

What is it that makes a relationship a partnership? It would seem that the first and foremost characteristics are those of shared responsibility, ownership and, importantly, shared risk in the creation of an enterprise of one kind or another. Consider the artistry of a Gobelin tapestry. It requires the designers and weavers, the spinners and dyers to engage in a set of relations which transcend the notion of hierarchy. Each contributes his or her skills and abilities, each is respected. If one fails to integrate with the others the result will be flawed.

Such a relationship stands in stark contrast to more traditional notions of consultancy, in which one party provides input of some expert kind for the benefit of the other. Implicit in this arrangement is the perception of a 'giver' and a 'receiver'. Knowledge, and the change which it produces, is dispensed as a commodity, rather than constructed as an outcome of an arrangement marked by reciprocity and mutuality.

In recent years, in Australia, there has been an increasing acknowledgment that work practices need to be developed around the concept of partnership with less intrusive and coercive management regimes. All participants are recognised as agents of the productive process, albeit on different scales and at different rates. Partnership does not preclude an understanding that some will be more advanced in their skills and understandings than others, that some will be in need of greater assistance than others. What is distinctive is that involvement in development will be collaborative, rather than coercive; cooperative, rather than competitive; enabling rather than disabling, oriented to means as well as ends.

The emergence of better understandings of partnership in the conduct of various enterprises in Australia has not come about by chance. In the last decade there has evolved a specific socio-political context which has made the restructuring of work relations imperative. Lepani (1992) has argued that Australia has to find a new place in a greatly changed global economic order and be poised to innovate in the knowledge that

our most flexible resource is human rather than material (Boomer, 1988).

It is in this context that the National Project on the Quality of Teaching and Learning (NPQTL) was formed. Three major working parties were formed: Work Organisation and related Pedagogical Issues; National Professional Issues (registration, accreditation, qualification); and, Teachers' Professional Preparation and Career Development (pre-service and in-service education). The National Schools Project has been a vital component of the Work Organisation working party. In the NPQTL we have a partnership which brings together the employing authorities, both government and non-government, and the teachers' unions in a climate of mutual respect and regard. As a result of the initiating partnership for the NPQTL the National Schools Project developed the concept further through a process of involvement with school staff and academic friends, the latter having formed a loose knit reference group for the project.

The National Schools Project rests upon the belief that educational professional in the schools have the capacity and will to critically enquire into their work practices in order to identify both those things which best facilitate student learning, and those features which act as impediments. As a consequence of such an enquiry, the practitioners would restructure the management of the school and its curriculum. The focus is always upon improved, ethically derived, learning outcomes for the school's students. Furthermore the Project is intended to provide information and ideas from those within and around classrooms to those in a position to determine policy (Wilkinson, 1992, p.6). There is a commitment to restructuring by a process of enquiry and action founded upon a working consensus. Principals, faculty heads, experienced and novice teachers all may contribute to the decision-making. In some schools it has been possible for students and parents to play a significant role also.

This paper explores some of the possibilities arising from such partnerships for the reform and restructuring of schooling as a form of collegial professional development and will focus