Project Concept Development

It is widely recognised that the most valued 'product' of the future is knowledge. As such, 'Learning how to learn' is increasingly expected by employers, communities and the state. Schools have a critical role to play in developing students' capacity for knowledge creation, transfer and application skills - the meta competencies to do so is a key feature of successful learning economies.

In a political culture focussed on developing local school management, the Learning to Learn Project took on board the challenge to develop partnerships with local schools and districts to develop Curriculum Policy for the future. This together with the emerging global consensus regarding the expectations of schools to address the futures agenda underpinned Project conception. This global consensus recognises that there are a host of factors reflecting the inadequacies of the prevailing theoretical paradigm of education which is characterised by "reductionism, determinism and autonomous individualism, all undergirded by a stringent materialism" (Vitz 1996)." Becoming conscious of the limits of this paradigm emerged as core learning for Project participants.

The question of "What does it mean to educate for a future that matters?" is not one which could be taken up solely by any of the individual stakeholder groups. The Project recognised that genuine partnerships in envisaging a new map for educational redesign were needed.

"Better knowledge management will not arise spontaneously in schools - as with the case with business and industry it will require champions to exercise the necessary leadership which is involved in changing the culture of schools."

Knowledge Management in the Learning Society
OECD CERI /CD (99)10

Curriculum Policy Directorate recognised the crucial role they play in fostering innovation. Hence the ambitious Project focus on Learning to Learn - not only about pedagogy which focussed on generative thought and creativity as the needed 'knowledge' of the future, but also about systemic leadership of change for moving beyond school reform to redesign.

"Times of change require a capacity to innovate and skill at managing process and uncertainty. How do we educate for greater creativity in this sense - and not just for the artist types, but for everyone?"

Asking the Right Questions
Charles Johnson 1996

The Project therefore aimed to support the development of leading edge, futures oriented curriculum policy through:

- Connecting South Australia to the latest learning research and world's best practice to develop Project sites knowledge base - through the Core Learning Program leaders and staff have taken this latest research into the local environment for experimentation and reconceptualising the work of the school. This learning has accelerated Project participants understandings of both the imperatives for change and the needed innovations, at the same time as providing "license to re-think."
- **Reconnecting teachers to their vocation** - the explicit use of constructivist methodology and focus on learning principles as opposed to implementation strategies in the Core Learning Program, valued teachers as professionals and co-constructors of the needed redesign. Recognition of "teachers' moral purpose" as a driving force for their learning and placing teachers and leaders at the centre as both learner and creator has been an underpinning principle of all Project thought and activity.

- **Influencing the System Knowledge Base** - The valuing of emergent planning has enabled the Learning to Learn Project to both respond to and initiate connections across and beyond the Department in developing common understandings of the pivotal role of learning in school and system redesign. Curriculum Policy Directorate staff, together with a range of other DETE Directorate staff participated in the Project's ongoing learning programme and Practicums in significant numbers.

The scope of this Project vision demanded new design principles based on the notion of "learning our way forward". From the outset a fundamental belief was that both project management and service delivery must reflect the transformative aspirations of the Project. To build trusting relationships, achieve confidence of the sites to take risks in their learning and develop generative processes - this had to be modelled in all facets of the Project.

Building on the success of earlier South Australian curriculum reform projects such as ELIC, BLIPS, LLIMY and Focus Schools, which had placed the expert teachers' voice at the heart of the reform process was essential. From projects such as these we had learnt the power of engaging teachers as professionals and valuing their voice. South Australia's history of curriculum innovation is what enabled the 'leap' from the conception of reform to one of redesign. It was within this historical context that Curriculum Policy Directorate would evolve the Learning to Learn Project.

What the Project was to learn at a deeper level was that the engagement of teachers with constructivist learning approaches and the necessary ingredient of time - long term reflection for teachers to engage at a deeper level with their own beliefs and mental models was key to sustainable redesign. Recognition and exploration of the oft repeated "We teach who we are" became central to the Core Learning Program. What was needed was to find ways of sustaining the reforms to whole school rethinking of roles in the 21C.

The reform literature tells us that historically curriculum reforms worldwide have not been transformative, but have locked us into incremental models of change or have been fragmented, uncoordinated and ephemeral. Change which enabled us to do what we already did better, but not to do the needed "new things"! This fleeting approach to change has not enabled the depth and anchorage needed for sustainability. Curriculum Policy Directorate needed a Project model which recognised that innovation, change and uncertainty rather than equilibrium form the natural state. How could the Project through its management processes, modelling, structures, implicit messages, interactions, documentation, and actions demonstrate the real value lies in the exploration of this uncertainty? Supporting sites recognise that the discomfort and unease with the current paradigm was essential in the process of collective reinvention.

"The first step towards the creation of a learning community - a critical learning system - is therefore the facilitation of consciousness of the process of learning itself: Learning to learn about learning - what has been termed meta-learning (Kitchener 1983)"

Richard Bawden 2000

An initial maxim for the Project had been "beyond the busy-work - the doing" to re-engaging as learners and theorisers of our craft. The intent would thus become that of helping Project members to "see their worlds differently as a prelude for doing things differently – essentially more systemically."
Changing the way we collectively construe ourselves means collectively changing the way we think about ourselves, to lead in turn, to changing the way we collectively act”.  

Bawden 2000

The Project has developed through 3 broad stages. In 1999, creating the collective vision by engaging in joint learning about purpose and values driven development, the brain/mind principles of learning and Futures - essentially focusing on the big picture through the mandated and optional Core Learning Program. In 2000 deepening the learning of sites through synthesis activities (eg Practicums) and reconnecting teachers to their passion through inspirational learning coaches. It was at this time recognition of the need for ‘holistic/systemic' change surfaced in the Project schools and preschools. In 2001 the Project aims to widen its sphere of influence in seeding the learning to support current SACSA implementation and future policy development.

In the first year of the Project it became clear that much “unlearning of the non-learning patterns of the past” was needed. If the first stage of the Project was about the “license to think” then the next had to be supporting sites work with the uncertainty and complexity that accompanies this. For many sites the first 2 years of their Project involvement was one of "chaotic reorganisation". Reorganisation of their thinking and understandings through extended learning about learning. This led to a higher order of complexity in their thinking about their world and work. As Arthur Costa (1997) humorously reminds us, this is a natural part of learning;

We have not succeeded in answering all of your problems.
The answers we have found only serve to raise a whole new set of questions.
In some ways we believe we are as confused as ever, but we believe that we are confused on a higher level and about more important things.”  

Costa

From the Project Management point of view, supporting sites to move beyond the “Tell us what to do" syndrome required huge energy to resist the giving of recipes. In these times of paradox the community is seeking certainty and order, whilst the local and global context demands a new way. Complexity such as this continues to challenge leaders at all levels across the Project. But, the old bureaucratic and hierarchical management model where compliance overshadowed learning had to be unwoven and providing “answers/solutions” would undermine the learning principles and touchstones which governed the Project. Creating open space for the Project sites and Curriculum Policy Directorate to engage in extended learning conversations, to surface and explore the truly disconfirming, the sacred cows and the often reified pedagogies would take time.

In systems terms the Project was working towards an autopoietic paradigm - one which enabled sites and the centre to recapture their capacity for self organisation and renewal. One where a dynamic flux between the old "top down and bottom up" ways would move the Project forward. Finding the connections between these was key. Generating the new boundaries of this paradigm would be through a constant and relentless focus on learning and redefining ourselves as a community of educators.

It would not be sufficient to merely tinker around the edges of existing structures and mindsets - a new gestalt, a transformation was needed.

"A paradigm shift is required which places the responsibility for driving schools forward in the hands of school leaders, staff and their communities, and the responsibility for learning firmly in the hands of students. This involves radical rethinking of what a school is, where it is located and what it does.”  

Vision 2020 Conference
Traditional curriculum reform projects of incremental change are often characterised by a linear view of change. Change is viewed as the result of adhering to a 'blueprint' which is usually initiated by a central authority. The focus and means of development of these models of incremental improvement values the delivery of 'answers' by the experts and replication of best practice - passive knowledge management.

Whilst there are both strengths and limitations with this paradigm of reform, systematic reflection reveals ways forward for whole of system redesign efforts. For example, these traditional models significantly benefit the individual sites involved, but have limited success in enabling the organisation as a whole to develop new understandings of the changes necessary for reconceptualising schooling for the 21C. The Project recognised the need to design in;

1. The generation of new thinking and understandings about the learning process - knowledge generation
2. The translation of this knowledge and learning outwards to the system as a whole

The Learning to Learn Project recognised the need for project design that would enable sites to actively explore and design a new paradigm for schooling based on the most recent understandings about learning. Therefore in building on, and in contrast to some of the above, the following thinking would underpin Project design;

A view of change as organic/dynamic that valued
- A culture of exploration and learning
- A view of schools and preschools as complex, open systems
- Developing the whole school as a community of learners - staff, parents and students
- Change results from/is;
  - Individual educators as co-constructors of the curriculum derived from internalised learning principles within systems frameworks
  - Patterns emerging from chaos
  - Responding to local needs within the context of the general and global contexts
  - Metamorphosis to a new paradigm

A focus and means of development that valued
- The connection between the learning and teaching - 'unrelenting concern for outcomes underpinned by commitment to core values' Caldwell 2000
- Developing teachers and schools as a source of reference to the local education system, other teachers and schools, national and international educational systems
- Alliances formed for enrichment, synergy, multiple views for generative process and thought
- Creating practice from principles - a generative approach

A view of teaching and learning that valued
- Teacher as designer, reflective practitioner - redefining the teacher 'expert'
- Teaching and learning through consciousness of who you are and why you do what you do
- Personal/social relationships
- Learning as the construction of personal meaning in order to take action
- Success demonstrated by capacity to act autonomously

Essentially the Project was designed around a vision of education often described as 'the third way'. This view calls for absolute adherence to core values;

‘we should be infinitely adaptable and imaginative in the means of applying those values. There are no ideological preconditions, no predetermined veto on means. What counts is what works. The challenge in establishing a ‘third way’ view of public education is therefore to be clear about two things: first, the ends that are sought and, second the values that should underpin the achievement of those ends.” Cited by Midgley 1998, p.44 in Caldwell 2000
A series of 'touchstones', which were to prove the long term anchor for Project thinking emerged early from the group.

"Touchstones once were used to test the purity of gold and silver. Struck against the high-grade metal, they would show a distinctive mark. The word 'touchstone' evokes spiritual images of touching, making contact, having a solid base, and being a tangible reminder of truth. We all have touchstones in our lives - our principles, a word from a friend, a favourite quotation against which we measure our own thoughts and actions."

Hazelden Education Materials

The Project's 'tangible reminders of truth' and questions of importance included;

1. Going with the energy, follow the passion - learning is an invitational process, educators need to re-engage as learners to transform the existing paradigm of education.
2. Valuing emergence - begin with starting points and then allow processes to be driven by the learning.
3. Recognition of 'less is more' – seeking depth as well as coverage.
4. Balancing pressure and support.
5. Recognition that conscientisation is key - knowing that we teach who we are - perspective consciousness being a core skill for all involved in transformative endeavours.
6. Asking ourselves - "Is this just a faster caterpillar?" "What is there that's new in our thinking or do we merely continue to rehash old ways of thinking and old solutions?" "Is this response about learning or control?" "Are we moving towards ever increasing alignment?"

These continue to evolve from the patterns of meaning generated through Learning Circles, review meetings and Practicums.

**The Project Design and Model**

**The Meta-Design**

Central to the Learning to Learn Project's success has been design that included a meta-level of planning. The metadesign for the Project built on the touchstones and questions above. Aspects of this meta-model have brought coherence and holism to the Project;

- **Pressure and Support** - The Project design principle of balancing 'pressure and support' over time is essential for transformational change to occur. In 1999/2000 the Core Learning Program and Learning Circles provided the scaffold for deep reflection about learning and change and the Practicums provided a significant accountability point at which sites synthesised their learning and shared this publicly with their peers across the state.

- **Unlearning** - Consciously deconstructing (or unlearning) the non-learning patterns of the past dominated the work of the Project in the first year. Inherent in this aspect of the meta-design was the recognition of the need to build trust with sites for learning to occur.

- **Alignment of Theory and Practice** - If trust was to develop, the espoused theory about learning had to match the practice. Deliberate and purposeful modelling by the Project Manager and Assistant was essential to this - in the interactions with sites, in the allocation of the lion's share of resourcing to the sites for their learning, in the selection of the key consultants to the Project and the themes of the Core Learning Program, in the conversations at Learning Circles and above all, the consistent valuing of teachers' collective wisdom of practice.

- **Trust in Emergence** - A key precept of systems theory and a feature of learning communities is that of emergence. "Meaning is a property which is emergent in both individuals and communities, through the interactions of different ways of knowing."

Bawden
Belief in this property as a feature of the developing learning communities within the Project enabled resistance to delivering "the answers". The Project maintained a focus on learning rather than implementation strategies, in the belief that these would emerge from the explorations of new understandings about learning. As teachers and leaders constructed their own deep understandings of learning and values driven vision for their school/preschool, alignment of classroom practices, the decision making processes, models of engagement and school policy and structures began to emerge.

The meta-design aspects were given form through the following Project strands;

1. **The Core Learning Programme** - In rapidly changing times such as these all educators need regular opportunities for continuing professional development under the guidance of outstanding practitioners because of the 'strong artistic and tacit nature of teaching'. The Core Learning Program ensured all Principals/Directors, school based Project leaders and staff were exposed to leading edge research regarding learning and complementary constructivist pedagogies and methodology. This enabled leaders to renew/reconstruct a vision of their sites as learning communities.
   Facilitators engaged for the life of the project included;
   - Dr Julia Atkin - leading international consultant focussing on The Integral Learning Model, Effective Learning Pedagogies and Reconceptualising the Curriculum
   - Professor Renate Nummela Caine and Geoffrey Caine - responsible for the foundational synthesis of the Brain Based Learning Research and developers of the work in Mindshifts and the 12 Brain/Mind Learning Principles
   - Professor Richard Bawden - world leader in systems theory, systems thinking and co-developer of the Experiential/Inspirational Learning System
   - Dr Robin Fogarty - author of the major body of work regarding metacognition, one of the key capabilities for lifelong learning
   - Dr George Otero - author of renowned works regarding the role of engagement in learning and the Relational Learning model
   - John Joseph - South Australian expert in the field of brain based research

2. **The Learning Circles** - provided Project site leadership teams with a small trusted group of colleagues to support the deepening of understandings gained from the Core Learning Program regarding the new sciences, systems theory and organisational change. Regular meetings were facilitated by the University of South Australia, School of Education Colleagues together with the Project Manager. Learning Circles also provided a forum to canvas leaders' views regarding project directions and project management issues.

3. **The Project Colleague Network** - The well established professional boundaries and jurisdictions between the educational sectors remain(ed) a formidable barrier in school reform. Harnessing the potential innovation and energy from learning across sectors and non traditional networks provided conditions ripe for the generation of new knowledge. Relationships were therefore deliberately established between the Project and:
   - The University of South Australia through a contractual arrangement for Leaders Learning Circles, and Research Workshops
   - The Douglas Mawson Institute of TAFE and the Onkaparinga Institute of TAFE through the Student Support Counsellors
   - District Superintendents and District Coordinators
   - Leading National and International Educational Consultants such as those listed above
   - DETE Projects such as the School Based Research and Reform Project and the Discovery Schools Project
   - The Office of Review, DETE
   - The South Australian Centre for Leaders in Education
   - District based Managers of Services - eg Senior Social Workers
   - Technology School of the Future
The Project Colleagues have been strong advocates of the Project at the local, national and international level. For example - the Project featured in John Joseph's presentation to the 2000 Principals' Conference in Canberra and George Otero from the United States, a leading international consultant and developer of the 'Relational Learning' model has initiated discussions regarding sharing Project conceptualisation and process with educators from the USA.

4. The Service Agreement and Annual Review Meetings - recognised the essential partnerships with sites and districts and the Curriculum Policy Directorate. The Service Agreement describes the responsibilities of all parties in ensuring that the outcomes of the project are achieved. Annual funding to sites was dependent on achievement of the Service Agreement. This was determined in conjunction with the District Superintendent through the annual Review Meetings.

5. The Practicums - extended professional development programs of three days duration that provide teachers and leaders across the state with opportunities to learn from Project sites. The Practicums model was specifically designed to ensure Project sites synthesised their learning to support sites across the state develop their understandings of the latest learning research. This would form a critical accountability point for sites. The Practicum learning program was loosely framed as the sharing of the site learning journey around a central core of constructivist learning theory and practice.

Project Management

We needed management structures which would both lead and emerge from the needs of the Project - the more innovative and demanding the project the more flexible and responsive the structures needed to be. The working principles that guide Partnerships 21 were equally applicable to the Learning to Learn Project. 'Building on success, developing partnerships and maximising the local, freedom and responsibility, authority and accountability, transparency and improved learning outcomes' were coherent with project conception and implementation.

For example, recognition of the tenets 'maximising the local' and 'freedom and responsibility' could be seen in the following elements;

- Sites' areas of investigation was not prescribed (as per the former Areas of Study approaches), but would fall broadly within the Learning to Learn concepts of exploration of appropriate learning and learning environments for students of the 21C. A range of school priorities were sought through the selection process to harness the learning through the inherent tension of divergence and diversity.
- Maximum possible funding would be devolved to sites to enable ownership and planning of their development focus
- The metaphor for the Project would be that of 'The Journey' - stressing the learning our way forward and experimentation for the generation of new knowledge
- Learning about the organic nature of change and the brain/mind principles of learning would form the basis of the Core Learning Program
- A culture which values emergent thought and process would be modelled through all aspects of the Project - sites are encouraged to seek out new thinking and consultants to work with the Project Core Learning Program

A distinctive feature of the Project was the partnership model of management and leadership of the focus areas between educators from the identified schools/centres and clusters, District
Superintendents, District Personnel and Curriculum Personnel. This has enabled a minimalist project infrastructure of the appointment of a single Project Manager and Project Assistant responsible for overseeing and coordinating the Project.

The Project recognised that decisions regarding project implementation are best made at the local level, with enabling leadership. Therefore a deliberate decision was made to forgo the traditional hierarchical structure of decision making bodies such as steering groups, reference groups etc to developing a broader more inclusive range of processes for accessing the voice of all stakeholder groups within the project.

To this end Learning Circles were established to provide intensive opportunities for leadership learning but also a forum by which The Project Manager could consult project leadership teams regarding project vision and management issues. Further to this, individual work with sites by the Project Manager and Principal Policy Officer Futures built in feedback loops to gather data on emerging issues. Ongoing feedback regarding the various elements of the Project, particularly the Core Learning Program has been sought on an consistent basis by the Project Assistant through regular telephone interviews, the annual site review meetings, the Practicum feedback proformas and formal reviews such as that of the Learning Circles. The ongoing analysis of this data has informed Project directions to date.

**Into 2001**

The project thus far has layed the foundational culture for learning and a desire amongst sites to reconceptualise their work for the new century. This has required the courage to analyse existing mindsets regarding educative purpose, the role of the teacher and the nature of learning.

"At the outset of the project you never proclaimed the enormity of the learning and the change that would be coming. No-one can tell you how big something is going to be …….but we knew you were planning and leading something big! The procedures set up around the project have all been enabling, have recognised the tardy and the dim, the excruciatingly fast moments and the just as excruciating slow ones, the times when we wobbled and the times when we soared.'

*Nancy Wilson Principal, Direk Primary School*

Practicums in particular have proven to be an exceptional model in supporting host sites development of collective purpose and explicit understandings of the learning process. Principals and Directors alike of host sites have proclaimed the Practicums to be the single most transformative process their school has ever engaged in. The written feedback from participants has also been characterised by comments such as those below which demonstrate the power of the Practicum model to engage educators in deep reflective process for personal change. A recurring theme throughout the feedback was a sense of 'permission' gained to engage with authentic pedagogies;

- From Secondary Teachers and Leaders - 'This has been the most significant learning of my career', 'I learnt that constructivism is a valid and very real and relevant approach to teaching and learning', 'The candid sharing of their thinking and practices by the staff was enlightening, gave me encouragement and made me reflect to take action in my school' 'I'm going to change my thinking of always focussing on content rather than learning', 'I've learnt that it's worth taking risks and it takes time to implement change', 'Inspirational'.

- From Preschool Directors and Staff - 'Taking the time out for 3 days as a staff has allowed us to refocus on the important things - this has been the most valuable T&D I have done', 'The Project has given me a new way of looking at my long term planning and processes', 'I
feel I am just beginning to restructure my thinking and have felt in great need of doing this as old ways have been so frustrating. I have been aware of many of these ideas but felt that I was "not allowed" to change - now I feel comfortable to make positive changes and become less rigid in my own practice', 'Everyone in education should do these Practicums'.

- From R - 7 Principals and Staff - 'Fabulous opportunity for reflexive, recursive learning', 'Very powerful model of teacher learning', 'The three days were wonderful - new knowledge, great substantive dialogue, new mental maps', 'My learning lemniscate between the experiential and inspirational', 'The planning and quality of all that was presented blew me away - it was a transforming experience', 'My most significant learning has been tempering the Aristotelian notions of praxis, phronesis with Bawden’s ethical/inspirational learning.’

The Project is now at a point to provide more specific options and pathways for site development. Balancing ‘pressure and support’ will again be a priority. The valued ‘support’ will continue through the Core Learning Program and the role of the Project Manager but will be more tailored to specific groups needs. The ‘pressure’ will assume a new form through the ‘Influencing Systems learning’ component of the Service Agreement.

Two distinct strands to the Project have therefore emerged for 2001 -

1. Strand A - Pedagogy and classroom/centre methodology focus - The Core Learning Program focuses on supporting leadership team members and staff further develop their understandings of the learning process through high level external support. Site contribution to developing the system's knowledge base will be primarily through network support of the 2000 Practicum group members, conference presentations and participation in the Learning to Learn Project Expo.

   Through the Review Meetings with sites in 2000, the primacy of this strand in seeding the needed thinking for schools/preschools to engage powerfully with systems policy was made clear. Time and again, Project sites spoke of their sense of repositioning - that through engagement with the Core Learning Program they had developed their understanding of 'praxis' and the ability to articulate this. They now felt a capacity to engage with the SACSA Framework in an empowered way - not as victims of mandates from above. Supporting sites across the state do this as we move to an evolutionary process for Curriculum Policy development beyond 2001 will be critical to the whole system approach of locally managed public schools.

2. Strand B - Systems Theory and Implications for School Redesign - The Core Learning Program will focus on supporting Principals/Directors and staff develop deep understandings of systems theory as a framework for leadership and school/centre redesign.

   Site contribution to developing the system's knowledge base will be primarily through direct feedback on request. This group will provide the Curriculum Policy Directorate in particular, with a highly knowledgable source of reference during the familiarisation year with SACSA. Ongoing forums and dialogue groups will be established to this end, but the challenge will be to move beyond the 'consultation model' to one of partnerships and co-construction. This is where the collective experience of the Directorate and sites bring to bear their uniquely developed experiential learning and insights to the task of shared policy development within a locally managed environment. The process by which this will occur will be designed in conjunction with the site and Policy Directorate stakeholders with the facilitation of Dr Julia Atkin and Professor Richard Bawden.

It is anticipated that the Project Manger will work more intensively with this group of leaders to support the site reculturing/restructuring transformation and facilitate the generative relationship between sites and the Directorate.
Continuing through 2001 are Funded Associate sites and an ever increasing satellite site group of schools and preschools. Support for these groups will continue through additional learning circles and the expectation that sites will present at the August 2001 Learning to Learn Project Expo.

2001 is the final year for many of the Learning to Learn Project sites. The Project will focus on creating deep reflection experiences for participants to internalise the needed new gestalt for themselves and schools to work towards sustainability of the learning cultures sites have developed. A summative Project evaluation and synthesis of the Learning to Learn Project to date in semester 2, 2001 will comprise the culminating project activity. Information from this evaluation will give essential information for the designing of the Learning to Learn Project 2002 - 2004.

**Learning our way forward 2002 - 2004**

One of the most significant outcomes of the Project has been the passion and energy emerging from "reconnecting teachers to their vocation". At the October 2000 SAPPAPA conference a group of Principals discussing future educational contexts highlighted this;

> This Project has been far more than any project. It's captured teachers imagination and pride in who they are. Teachers are excited again about making a difference. They now know that their collective wisdom of practice has a solid research base - they're more articulate about the ways forward. Leaders have a real knowledge base from which to challenge inappropriate practice. This energy, momentum for change can't be lost - it has to be built on"

> Jenny Short  Principal Highbury Primary School

Already it is clear that some emerging themes would drive the 2002 - 2004 development. For example Caldwell's ideas regarding the *'balancing of systematic innovation and systematic abandonment'* would be an essential element for existing sites remaining in the Project. The abandonment of pedagogical approaches that do not yield the outcomes required of students as autonomous, lifelong learners.

> "If the project theme is one of innovation, and if there is not to be an accretion of new tasks on old then it follows that a capacity for systematic abandonment is as important as a capacity for systematic innovation"

> The Learning Century

> Brian Caldwell 1999

The Key Development Areas of SACSA form the basis for this necessary rethinking of curriculum within schools and centres. Interrogating this within Project sites will be essential to moving the system as a whole forward.

Further developing Curriculum Policy Directorate's capacity to work with emergent process and strategy will be key to curriculum policy renewal and the Project's role within this. Mintzberg's work on 'Strategic Management' recognises that the key to the change dilemmas we face are usually based in our reliance on reason - rational control, the systematic reductionist analysis of issues and the false belief in controlled strategy. We must have an approach to redesign which acknowledges that we may not know all the answers, that is conducive to learning and developing solutions as we go - learning our way forward. This view was strongly echoed at the recent "Ninth International Conference on Thinking", January 2001 New Zealand by leading international educators - David Perkins - Harvard University, Peter Senge - MIT, Edward De Bono, Mihaly Csikszentmihaly, David Hyerle, Di Flemming and John Edwards to name but a few.
"Often formulation of thought and implementation merge into a fluid process of learning through which creative strategies and pathways evolve"

Henry Mintzberg

To say this more simply - it's in the experiencing and doing of it that ways forward emerge. A key learning from Learning to Learn has been that total reliance on planned strategy does not allow for the emergent learning. The principle of emergence is key to systems thinking - it acknowledges that much of what we know is tacit and emerges with time. The Project learning from 1999/2000 has demonstrated this time and again - the more open the process, the more enthusiastically the sites have taken up the challenge of deep learning. The power of the Practicums model has been testimony to this.

It is envisaged that Learning to Learn 2002 -2004 will comprise a group of both existing and new sites. This deliberate blend will provide a new element of mentoring whilst still allowing each site to build their journey for curriculum redesign. The developmental focus for the Project in 2002 - 2004 will be the creation of frameworks and processes which synthesise the learning from Curriculum Policy Directorate and sites for sustainable curriculum renewal. Sites will participate in partnership with Curriculum Policy Directorate with the recognition that their individual change journey will directly contribute to the change of the system as a whole. This shift builds on the work of Strand B in 2001, where new relationships are deliberately being forged. "Beyond consultation to co-construction" - the needed shift for policy development in a locally managed environment will be at the heart of Learning to Learn 2002 - 2004 and the Directorate's Curriculum Renewal Strategy.

Learning from the Project

"We shall not cease from exploration
And the end of all our exploring
will be to arrive where we started
and know the place for the first time" TS Elliott

Emerging from the Learning to Learn Project are clear directions and conditions that can be applied to other projects or programmes and will be the foundations of Learning to Learn 2002 – 2004.

Time and permission

Time and permission are fundamental to deepening the learning. Time and permission firstly to 'un-learn' old ways and relationships and then experiment 'on the side' as a way to re-construct new models and ways of viewing the world. One problematic aspect of the Project has been the pressure to show explicit links between teacher engagement and learning and improved learning outcomes in such a relatively short timeframe.

Conflict is essential

Intellectual conflict or cognitive dissonance is a critical element of the learning process. Those sites where the journey of the Project reveals significant distance travelled are those where 'conflict' has occurred. Conflict between co-workers, other participants or within a learner creates the discontinuity to critically reflect on our ways of viewing the world. Interestingly many leaders within the Project have commented on their learning about the role of conflict in changing school culture - having initially attempted to smother emerging tensions to now surfacing these as a force for energising the learning. The deep learning about this is just beginning to emerge in the third year of the Project, again demonstrating the time required for transformational change.
Leadership

Leadership is pivotal - leadership of the site based projects and overall project leadership. The capacity of communities to develop a 'field of vision' that is owned and fostered by the whole community has ensured the success of the learning. Some sites in the Project have experienced significant changes in site leadership but have still maintained an enduring learning culture surrounding the project.

The potential of the Learning to Learn Project concept is limitless. Existing sites mentoring the new, connecting systems priorities to the field with learning at the core - and a genuine response to local management in the development of leading systems and site partnerships to reconceptualise educational futures in South Australia.

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