

On the 30th of July 2003, a deputation of five executive members of INTAD met with the Director General of Education in Queensland. Details of that meeting including the agenda, members and the outcomes are all contained in the August INTAD Journal in 2003.

This article below was written as a background reading document for the Director General of Education.

STRUGGLES OF THE LAST DECADE

Education Queensland has made significant changes in terms of policy and management in the pursuit of world class curriculum delivery and efficiency over the past twelve years. The following article seeks to identify some of the strategic issues emanating from these policy directions that have had significant effects on the practical subject area of Industrial Arts across Queensland over this time frame.

No formal research into these changes and their effect has been undertaken, and the following information is based on anecdotal evidence gleaned from the teaching fraternity by this association, through such avenues as our Journal editorial, conference proceedings, executive meeting agenda and other teacher communications.

To some teachers the impact of the changes and policy directions of Education Queensland in this time frame have been profound and many have reported that their health has failed as a result. Others have found the new challenges stimulating and have established themselves to serve the students in their community with justifiable pride.

The Devolution of Responsibilities for Curriculum to Schools (decentralisation)

Probably the most profound changes came about in secondary schooling from the policy direction of devolution of a range of new responsibilities to schools to manage all aspects of curriculum delivery, especially the financial distribution. From this schools experienced a new freedom, however there would be snares within this freedom for the practical curriculum subject areas. It must be said that there were among principals many who saw aspects of the practical curriculum as a monumental waste of resources within the curriculum community.

Even with the Education Queensland policies of inclusiveness in place, it would not hold such fundamental beliefs back. With no formal policy framework of funding distribution within the schools from the central or regional bodies, principals prioritised the new mass funding allocation. With the removal of Departmental subject area inspectors to give checks and balances in this regard, many teachers felt vulnerable to argue for a fair distribution of school budget allocations. Centres of practical curriculum immediately began to suffer with no voice to counter the tightening funding allocations.

A further blow came with the ever decreasing time allocations to practical arts curriculum by principals. There were a variety of ways that were employed to diminish time away from practical curriculum through such things as vertical timetabling, subject placement on line systems for student choice and much more. Respected curriculum within the curriculum community is proportional to time allocation. In this respect principals were sending a very clear message.

A major blow to this new found difficult situation was the Department policy to eliminate a dedicated Head of Department (HOD) officer to each subject area in the practical

curriculum areas as was established through legislation. Now Industrial Arts might be led by a HOD from a background in Home Economics and this officer may also be responsible for Business Education as well. In many instances this proved disastrous for the subject area.

This also brought on significant trauma to many HOD personnel, faced with the enormous increase in work load, many of whom succumbed to severe health problems and left the service. Curriculum provision and teacher moral began to suffer greatly. But there was much more to come.

The level of administration responsibilities (paper work) has dramatically increased for all teaching staff over this time period. There are a host of reasons for this dramatic increase and this has diverted teacher time and energy away from their primary focus of teaching.

There was a struggle to gain a respected name of the subject area that would reflect the new senior syllabus directions of technology education. *Manual Arts* had been replaced in the 1980's by *Industrial Arts* but in many centres the old name with the stigma that many felt it had still remained. A new name *Industrial Technology and Design* was adopted in the 1990's and this was confirmed with the naming of the new subject area syllabus by the Queensland Schools Curriculum Council (QSCC). However there still remains remnants of all three names which causes many some concern.

Curriculum Change

Within the above climate there were massive changes being undertaken to the curriculum syllabuses documents in post compulsory Education.

The Vocational Education Agenda

The last decade of the twentieth century was dominated by change of considerable magnitude within the curriculum responsibilities of Industrial Arts. On the national scene successive governments were pushing to make industry more responsible for the training agenda of the various industry sectors with a view to divest itself of the training costs. In the midst of this was the evolution of the competency based training implementation. The schooling sector, it was felt, could well contribute to this training program and trials were set up to test this.

This would see the beginning of the end of pre-vocational education at TAFE institutes for which they (the institutes) had received multi millions to instigate. So the secondary schooling sector might just be able to achieve this outcome with no cost at all to the commonwealth or state governments.

Seeding funding was provided for the few schools who put their hand up and from this small cohort of schools, many more followed with the then Board of Senior Secondary School Studies (BSSSS) commissioned to find ways to map the outcomes of competency training for possible inclusion in tertiary entrance recognition. Competency training was received with very little enthusiasm in the hallowed halls of academia but was eventually included in the senior certificate if industry competencies were reached.

This would be the first major area for serious strain on teachers across the state where no formal funding pool was provided, no formal professional development was set up or rolled out. Patchy provision by industry Training Boards, Education Queensland Officers and later Officers from the BSSSS provided some information, policy and literature.

Schools had to shoulder the high costs of the provision often shamed at principal level into providing an inclusive curriculum provision.

Currently, 2003, there are forces at work to wind back the hard won *runs on the board* of current provision through such issues as teacher currency, school resources, interpretation of competency, recognition of certification achieved in the schooling sector, school funding and much more.

Under this new arrangement overseen by the then BSSSS, some five options were offered to schools encompassing four industry sector curriculum with certified competencies to level 1 or 2 and or an alternative composite program. These new programs were very time demanding to set up with schools having to *reinvent the wheel* site by site.

These issues are certainly not insurmountable but there does need to be a real valuing of the schooling sector contribution from a number of community groups such as Departmental and State Government, Industry training Boards, employer groups and from these appropriate support must follow.

The Three new curriculum flagships of Industrial Technology and Design (Industrial Arts)

As well in the academia area three new syllabuses were built in this time frame in the areas of Graphical Communication (Senior Graphics); Technology Studies, and Engineering Technology. Again only the trial schools were trained with any degree of professional support and all of these syllabuses were new in that they moved to a *Process Model* from the traditional *Content Driven Model*. Such a significant philosophical change required teachers to understand a whole new range of curriculum practice both in terms of preparing learning activities and managing classroom practice together with assessment techniques. One could only describe this as a Quantum Leap for many teachers.

It should be noted here that there were now two paradigms of curriculum management and assessment running simultaneously in this new order. The Industry training programs with Competencies management and assessment and the Overall Position (OP) academic curriculum with criteria based curriculum with process models of structure. The BSSSS was also insisting that Technology Studies must also have Industry Training embedded within it. This came about due to political pressures to find recognition of Voc Ed within the academic curriculum and the BSSSS decided on a crude model of inclusion to satisfy this demand.

The advent of the Key Learning Areas

There has been a drive from the national government level for some considerable time to gain some bench marks for identifying levels of teaching performance across the states and the Hobart Declaration gave all states a common agreement to meet this. The federal government spent a considerable amount of money to develop national curriculum with healthy funding packages to entice states to trial the new P-12 curriculum which was divided into new key learning areas. During early to mid 1990's Queensland did follow other states in limited trial programs with some considerable success but not until the

advent of the Queensland Schools Curriculum Council (QSCC) did the development of Key Learning Areas (KLA) begin in earnest.

Unfortunately, due to political reasons the supporting legislation was weak and with the demise of QSCC and the responsibility of managing the KLA's given to the new Queensland Curriculum Authority. It would seem that the future of KLA curriculum in Queensland is currently in limbo. There has also been considerable work done by Education Queensland in the area of the *New Basics* which has been developed parallel to the KLA curriculum. This has served to confuse and frustrate the teaching fraternity in the development of appropriate respected curriculum.

KLA curriculum is characterised by learning outcome philosophy and this in itself represents yet another quantum leap or at least a steep learning curve for many teachers in terms of developing meaningful activities for students, managing these activities in the context of a practical workshop facility and then assessing and reporting outcomes to a range of clients.

Where to from here

This association is committed to the support of its teacher members to ensure that they get appropriate professional support to keep abreast with respected curriculum practice. It is through such endeavours that these teachers will continue to provide quality learning experiences for their students, which will prepare them for further studies, the world of work and life long learning capability.

Teachers have had a very difficult twelve years of major change in all areas of their working experience. It is now in excess of twenty years since a concerted effort has been made to give professional development to all teachers across the state in this subject area.

Clearly these days of mass roll out of professional development are past, however *there must be, in the future some basic guarantees made at policy level to ensure that all teachers of practical curriculum are provided with ongoing funding for professional development.*

There must be some stronger legislative support for KLA curriculum to ensure its take up and accountability at school sites. *There needs to be a concerted effort to aid teachers teach technology curriculum in terms of developing meaningful activities for students, managing these activities in the context of a practical workshop facility and then assessing and reporting outcomes to a range of clients.*

There must be a state recognition through legislation and a training fund pool to ensure that schools who can show ability to deliver Vocational Education Training Competencies, can do so in the knowledge that their efforts are respected and valued by appropriate financial and professional development support.

oooOOOOooo