

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Throughout 2006-07, COACTEA has worked collaboratively with its members to further the work of the profession and assist in achieving the strategic intent of its national body, the Australian Joint Council of Professional Teaching Associations (AJCPTA). The variety of professional activities presented by the state and territory member associations has resulted in a rich calendar of learning experiences for teachers throughout the year. For more information, and contributions by COACTEA members to the National Values Education Project, please refer to the AJCPTA website at www.ajcpta.edu.au

COACTEA was delighted to have facilitated the first Canberra-based AJCPTA meeting in September, 2006 and again in Canberra on 26-27 May this year. This very successful meeting brought together members of the Council, COACTEA committee members and guest presenters, for example:

Jenny Lewis – ACEL representative for the ASCD/ ACEL/AJCPTA Conference *New Imagery for Schools and Schooling: Challenging, Creating and Connecting*. Sydney Convention Centre, 10-12 October 2007. COACTEA members are eligible for a discount on registration fees. Please state professional association membership details when applying. More information is available at the ACEL website.

Terry Hayes provided a stimulating presentation regarding the development of a National Curriculum. Recently the AJCPTA participated in a meeting hosted by the Australian Curriculum Studies Association (ACSA), to consider the establishment of a Standing Committee for National Professional Education Associations (NEPA). The meeting built on previous work undertaken by ACSA in February and August 2006 (Refer ACSA website at www.acsa.edu.au for reports) The endorsed principles from the meeting include:

- To identify and articulate the curriculum challenges for preparing young people for the

21st Century

- To contribute to the development of national approaches to curriculum
- To provide considered and timely responses to policy proposals and directions in curriculum that are of significance for Australia
- To contribute to and promote constructive and informed curriculum debate in Australia (Hayes, T. (2007) *Presentation to CPTAV Humanities Network April 2007. A National Curriculum: A work in progress*, pp.4-5).

(Refer also to Peter Cole's paper included on p 4 of this newsletter)

Louise Watson – National Professional Standards for Advanced Teaching and School Leadership Consultation Paper, published by Teaching Australia, March 2007. As highlighted on p.1 of the paper, 'The purpose of the consultation paper is to seek feedback on proposals for:

- A model of national professional standards for advanced teaching and school leadership; and
- How the standards will be developed, endorsed and reviewed'.

Professional associations are encouraged to discuss the paper and provide feedback to Teaching Australia by email to

standards@teachingaustralia.edu.au

For more information please contact Michele Suen on (02) 6125 9026 or

michele.suen@teachingaustralia.edu.au

Other speakers included Di Kerr, The Le@rning Federation; Nicole Panting, AGQTP; and Bob McMullen, ALP education policy.

Financial assistance for member association

The funding received through AJCPTA projects has greatly assisted the work of COACTEA and member professional associations. Through the allocation of small grants, COACTEA aims to support the specific events and activities of its members, rather than facilitate its own professional development programs.

In 2006, the Australian Association of Special Education was awarded a small grant to support its National Conference (Refer Report by Dr Gary Woolley on p 3 of this newsletter). The response to this approach is encouraging as evidenced in the following three applications for 2007:

- The Canberra Mathematical Association's application to bring Anthony Harradine from the Noel Baker Centre for School Mathematics in Adelaide to Canberra. He will run four workshops related to the use of technology (computer, graphics calculator, CAS calculator and data loggers) in the secondary classroom.
- To support CEGACT's Annual Conference on 10, 11 August 2007 at the Centre for Teaching and Learning in Stirling, Canberra. The theme is Game Enough to Try ICT (GETT IT!)
- To support SEA*ACT to present a four-hour Saturday professional learning session on the Science Learning Objects to teachers from rural and regional areas around Canberra. The session will take place in a rural centre.

Dinner Meetings

Several successful dinner meetings have been held for members. At the December dinner meeting, guest presenter Amanda Day, ACT DET, provided a stimulating presentation focused on current issues and debates surrounding the National Values Education Project.

Association Liability Workshop

COACTEA continues to consider ways in which it might arrange joint cover for its members. The limited number of applications for assessment worked against the achievement of a positive outcome in 2006.

Professional Contributions

COACTEA members have assumed an active role on a variety of working parties, committees and projects related to the development of policy, curricular or professional learning activities, e.g., Staff in Australia's Schools (SiAS) Project; ACT DET Curriculum Review Committee and the development of Essential Learning Achievements (ELAs); ACT DET Values Education Committee; Key Issues and Advisory Groups to support the work of the Teacher Registration Reference Group, ACT Government; the AGQTP Cross-sectoral Committee; and the AGQTP Forum Keynote address in Canberra in December. COACTEA was also represented at the Literacy and Numeracy Expo held Sept 2 at the CTL Stirling, ACT.

Data-base and website

COACTEA members are encouraged to regularly update their contact details to ensure the data-base and website is correct. Details to Jane Brown at bjbrown@bigpond.com

Looking forward

The strength of COACTEA lies in the contributions of its members and many have offered their expertise to the organisation and administration of events and activities. In such busy times, these contributions are highly valued; without them the important work of professional associations would not be realised. As President, I would like to thank the committee for their significant contribution to the ongoing work of COACTEA. Through the AJCPTA, COACTEA has an important role to play in the development of an effective national and local professional learning community that supports and enhances the work of teachers. We look forward to working with you throughout the second half of 2007.

Dr Carolyn Broadbent
June 2007

Do we have the correct contact details for your association?

Newsletters are sent by mail or through the courier to the President and the COACTEA Delegate for your association. Are you the President or COACTEA Delegate? If not, **please** ensure someone in your association advises COACTEA of the changes and new contact details.

Take a look at the address on the envelope. Is it the correct address for you or was the envelope redirected to you at a new address? If the address is incorrect please contact Jane Brown on phone 6288 1904, fax them to 6288 0230 or email to bjbrown@bigpond.com **Help us keep in touch with you !!**

COACTEA Sponsored Project
Australian Association of Special Education
National Conference

The Australian Association of Special Education (AASE) National Conference was held at the Hyatt Hotel in Canberra from 29th September until 2nd October, 2006. “Learning Together: Leading Practice in Inclusive Education” was the theme of the conference, which aimed to provide participants with an extensive and practical look at leading practice in the inclusion of students with special needs, through keynote addresses, workshops, panel discussions and poster presentations.



Delegates networking during morning tea outside the Hyatt Hotel

The three-day event was a huge success and delegates were presented with challenging keynote addresses from Dr. Jeff Bailey, Dr. Paul Paliano, and Prof. Tony Shaddock. Each of the presenters gave some expert insight into the role of special educators and the future direction of inclusive education. The conference also supported a wide range of workshop presenters, sharing a range of successful inclusive practices taking place in Australian schools.

The conference dinner was organised by the Catholic Education Office. With three quarters of the conference participants in attendance the evening proved an entertaining mix of magicians, chapter chants and dancing to a live band.

Dr Gary Woolley
University of Canberra

School Curriculum for the 21st Century
A Rough Guide to a National Curriculum
Prepared for the Curriculum Standing Committee of National Education
Professional Associations
by
Peter Cole (April 2007)

Preamble

Collaborative federalism that seeks to develop a curriculum for the 21st Century and establishes a series of commitments designed to make schooling more engaging, rewarding and equitable should be supported.

However, if within this broader collaborative agenda a National Curriculum is conceived as being an amalgam or rationalization of States' and Territories' curriculum statements into a single national statement it seems to me to be of modest importance. Rather the focus should be on developing a common curriculum that will enable all students to develop a broad general knowledge of their world. My starting point is that the fundamental goal of schooling should be to ensure that all students have acquired a broad general knowledge that enables them to understand their own society (e.g. its history, institutions, economy and values), engage with society's issues, be enriched by society's cultural life and be open to the wider world. And the achievement of this goal should be the purpose of the National Curriculum.

Why is the reconciliation and rationalization of State and Territory curriculum approach less helpful? Firstly, most states have fairly similar descriptions of what students should learn at the different stages of schooling, although the 'subject' names may not always convey this, and a 'tidying up' of relatively superficial differences in the structure and vocabulary of curriculum statements seems a fairly innocuous activity. Secondly, we are talking about a curriculum document that by its very nature can only describe in relatively broad terms the learning to be promoted over thirteen years of schooling. It therefore is likely to have a very limited impact on the quality of students' schooling experiences and the levels of attainment they achieve.

Of all the factors that could be changed in order to improve the attainment levels of students, the choice to devote time and resources to convert State and Territory curriculum statements into a National Curriculum statement would seem to be a pretty insignificant reform strategy.

Of course, the drive for a National Curriculum becomes less benign if as a result of the redrafting process there are requirements to teach and assess content that redefines or goes beyond what the States and Territories have hitherto considered to be essential learning. It is also less benign if the national statement is framed in such a way that its adoption will bring about substantial changes in the learning that students experience in the classroom, in the way that school timetables are structured and the way that learning is assessed and certified.

Although I consider the development of a national curriculum to be symbolically significant, unless it becomes more than an exercise in reconciling the relatively minor variations in curriculum statements between the States and Territories to produce a common national statement, and unless it has traction within the classroom, it is unlikely to significantly enhance or worsen a student's experience of schooling. So, to be an activity that is more than an exercise in avoiding unnecessary duplication, the National Curriculum also needs to be more than a reconciliation of the curriculum statements of our States and Territories.

Consequently, the discussion that follows largely ignores the current state of play in relation to the development of a National Curriculum and provides some initial thinking about the kind of National Curriculum statement that could improve a student's learning experience. It borrows from developments that are already evident in various State and Territory curriculum statements and should be perpetuated in any National Curriculum statement and adds other aspects that might seem to be at odds with most current curriculum statements and thinking.

It is premised on the view the National Curriculum must encourage and enable virtually every student to stay engaged with learning so that they can complete secondary schooling and gain a recognized certificate. And finally, it is not 'polished' thinking but rather a rough guide to what a National Curriculum should seek to achieve and focuses discussion on a few matters that have generally escaped the spotlight.

Key propositions

The key propositions advanced in this paper are as follows:

- A National Curriculum conceived as a reconciliation of current State and Territory differences, whilst generating significant efficiency benefits, will be of marginal value in improving student learning.
- A National Curriculum should be concerned with the common learning undertaken by all students.
- The National Curriculum should not consume all of a school's learning time.
- The National Curriculum's impact should be largely confined to the compulsory years.
- National Subjects (and common credentialing requirements) should be developed for the senior years.
- A National Curriculum and National Subjects are distinct concepts.
- National Curriculum subject content should support inter-disciplinary study and promote 'big picture' general knowledge.
- The National Curriculum should be taught in ways that enable students to appreciate the distinct contribution that each of the disciplines/subjects makes to enriching their understanding of society.
- The National Curriculum should promote global perspectives, incorporate the development of 'soft skills' and include second language learning that is confined to only a few common second languages.
- Assessments of the National Curriculum should be intra- and cross-disciplinary, more concerned with reasoning than with recall and be concerned with what students can do as well as with what they know.

What should be preserved?

Over the last decade there have been three developments in the way that curriculum statements are written that are worth preserving. These developments are the enunciation of:

- the characteristics of various stages of learning are their corresponding curriculum orientations
- the dimensions of personal and social development learning that should be part of the structured curriculum experienced by all students
- learning outcomes (i.e. what should students know, be able to do and value) and standards to be achieved in relation to knowledge and skill outcomes.

Where to start?

Generally curriculum developers start out by considering questions such as what are the key forces that are most likely to exert an influence on the life chances of young Australians over the next 20-30 years and then considering the sort of learning that schools can provide to enable school graduates to shape and respond to these forces. This 'futures scanning' is not new territory but it bears some repeating.

It seems generally agreed that the world that is ahead for school leavers will have the following features:

- globalization of economies – economic power centred on China, India and Japan
- reliance on international markets – entrepreneurs and workers will need to have a global outlook and international competence
- increased concern about environmental degradation, water and energy shortages, global warming, pandemics (e.g. AIDS and Avian Flu) - globalisation of environmental concerns will require international cooperation for global solutions
- insecurity of nations and competing power blocs – citizens will need to be able to engage with national and international issues of security, understand the need to build alliances, understand the factors that generate conflict and mistrust between nations

- internationalization of employment – accelerated international migration, working overseas increased, multinational work teams, will require cultural awareness, sophisticated inter-personal skills
- a science and technology edge will be important for gaining an economic edge – an interest in innovation and in science and technology will need to be nurtured in schools
- the knowledge economy will be the generator of most wealth and jobs – the capacity to identify problems, to work in multidisciplinary teams to identify solutions, to manage complex and multidimensional tasks, to synthesise ideas and to communicate effectively will be needed.

Others have developed more expansive lists, but these seem a pretty good starting point for framing a discussion of what a curriculum in the Twenty-first Century should achieve for all students.

What sort of skills and knowledge do all students need?

Each of the states and territories have set out in their ‘essential curriculum’ statements their views about the knowledge, skills and attitudes that schools need to nurture. Many of these statements acknowledge that traditional subjects or key learning areas need to be supplemented by learning that develops ‘soft skills’ and the capacity to keep learning. Some of the propositions below reflect perspectives currently covered in the curriculum statements of most States and Territories, but others are not typically represented in curriculum statements.

At the most general level by the time they leave school all students need:

- to be able to receive, retrieve and express increasingly complex ideas and information in visual and spoken form. This requires them to be highly competent in assembling, manipulating and interpreting numbers and in listening, reading, writing, viewing and speaking. And in presenting information in a variety of forms using a variety of media. **Why?** Because creativity, imagination, adaptability, social competence, problem identification and problem-solving, and the capacity for informed decision-making depends upon a good facility in language and in reading and interpreting number-based information and in presenting ideas and findings.
- personal and inter-person skills to be able to sustain a healthy lifestyle and build positive relations with others, to establish a values framework that embraces a concern for others and to understand and reflect on their personal motives and behaviours and if need be change these to sustain personal wellbeing and support the wellbeing of others. **Why?** Because poorly developed skills in these areas affects self esteem, happiness and the capacity to participate in a rich social, community and work life. Well developed skills in these areas open up relationship opportunities, enhance job prospects, builds respect and trust and self-esteem.
- an understanding of human society – Where have we come from? What innovations changed civilisations? What accounts for economic differences, religious differences, political differences, differences in traditions and values? What are the ‘big isms’ that inform peoples’ mindsets and understandings? How do our minds work? **Why?** Because political, economic and religious theories and beliefs are key shapers of our world and young people need to know this and understand how differences in these domains play out in a society in terms of values, social behaviour and civic institutions. A basic knowledge of psychology and philosophy is needed to help understand what it means to be human.
- an understanding of science and technology - They should also have a knowledge of the history and philosophy of science and of key figures in the development of scientific understanding. They should know how science and technology contribute to and impact on the world. **Why?** An understanding of the place of science and technology in society is necessary for an understanding of our world as the big ideas of science have significantly shaped our understanding of nature, space, and our past and possible future.
- to be familiar with cultural activities and artifacts, to know who have been significant contributors to cultural life in its various forms and to be supported to become producers, supporters and consumers of cultural life. **Why?** Because everyone should be equipped to participate in,

appreciate and benefit from the cultural and artistic life of societies.

- to be global in outlook, to see themselves as a citizen of the world and be culturally aware and sensitive and acquire skills in a second language. **Why?** Because there is a danger that the next divide will be between those students that have a global outlook and international language and those who do not.
- to be environmentally aware and ecologically responsible – in one sense this is a subset of the impact of the actions that nations take in response to economic and political beliefs and pressures and of the need to understand science and technology and their possible contributions to destroying and salvaging our planet. **Why?** Because the continuation of the planet depends upon how nature's resources are used, the environment deserves to be singled out as an essential area for study and action.

What are the implications of the above list?

Currently learning is largely structured around disciplines and much of what a curriculum statement for the 21st Century could describe as essential learning could be captured in the traditional disciplines of mathematics, science, English, Languages, history, geography and economics. Knowledge of 'the body and the mind' and of what is needed to keep them healthy would also need to be in the curriculum mix as would knowledge of digital technology devices and their applications. However, to achieve the knowledge and skills alluded to above, the content that has been traditionally taught within the disciplines in schools would need to be significantly changed.

The content usually associated with school subjects in the disciplines is out of step with the kind of learning that is needed for all students to start to understand and make sense of 'the world' and feel capable of contributing to how the future will evolve. National collaboration should be about producing a common general curriculum designed to have all students leaving school with a broad general knowledge. But as schools will also need to provide specialized learning in the senior years in order to satisfy university entrance and course pre-requisite requirements, by implication a National Curriculum would not consume all of the teaching time. Indeed, it might be useful to distinguish between a National Curriculum and National Subjects as the definition used here for a National Curriculum is the common learning that is undertaken by all students and that results in them acquiring a broad general knowledge and requisite social skills and values. National Subjects could be subjects with nationally agreed specialist content that are taken by different student cohorts (e.g. a National Physics subject taken by senior science students) and are similar to current senior courses of study designed for students with higher education aspirations.

In one sense the propositions above are out of step with the view that the learning of curriculum content is a mile wide and an inch deep and that the solution to this is to narrow the focus and have 'deep learning' in specialist areas. Whilst it might be politically astute to talk about developing 'deep' knowledge, for who wants to support the development of 'shallow' knowledge, the priority for me is the development of a general knowledge that helps to explain society, gives students a sense of humanity's achievements and failures, gives them a sense of their place in history, gives them an appreciation of the arts, gives them an understanding of other peoples and cultures and a sense of how the world works. The contention here is that all students need in depth learning of 'big picture' content. Specialist and increasingly complex and abstract learning in say mathematics and science is desirable and should be available to those interested but goes beyond being essential learning for all students.

And when it comes to teaching, a timetable almost exclusively structured on the disciplines would most likely inhibit rather than assist students to gain an understanding of the inter-relatedness of factors that have and are shaping our world. Blocks of time need to be available for 'in depth' research tasks, syndicate work, extended projects and the preparation and delivery of student presentations, about 'big topics' (i.e. important and complex topics) that will require students to draw on knowledge from several discipline areas.

Whilst recognizing that problem solving does not happen in a knowledge vacuum and that problem solving in the sciences differs to that in history, big picture understanding is undermined if learning from the disciplines results in students acquiring disconnected facts, theories and skills.

In theory, disciplines provide learners with distinct ways of knowing that contribute to their understanding of the world. Unfortunately school subjects derived from the disciplines are experienced by students as disconnected bits of knowledge to be learnt for their own sake. This is because the selection of subject topics is strongly influenced by what has been in the school subject in the past and now needs updating. In this new attempt at a National Curriculum decisions about the selection of subject content should seek to maximize the subject's contribution to students' achieving the 'essential learning' broadly described above and to complement perspectives being promoted in the content of other discipline based subjects. Otherwise what is taught will be experienced as relatively arbitrary and disconnected facts to be learned for their own sake rather than being experienced as coherent and interconnected perspectives that contribute to filling in the jigsaw of a broader understanding.

The 'soft skills' focus is present in most curriculum statements produced in the last few years. However attempts to develop soft skills such as the ability to synthesise ideas and information to arrive at new conclusions, to generate fresh and original ideas, to identify problems and problem solve, to work in teams, to manage complex projects, to be empathetic and tolerant, and so forth are generally undercut when assessment regimes largely test the recall and manipulation of facts and the ability to mimic procedures associated with a particular discipline.

However in the work situation and in higher learning, young people will be expected to get along with others, work productively with others, draw inferences, interpret situations and information, reconcile conflicting advice and opinions, identify problems and contribute to problem resolution, reflect on their circumstances, engage in thoughtful discussion, locate and absorb new ideas and knowledge, develop proposals and make presentations, provide feedback on performance and ideas, and so on. They will be expected to have a strong work ethic, to be well organized, independent and flexible learners/workers, to be able to back up their beliefs with evidence and to be reliable, loyal and ethical. These expectations should not come as a shock to school graduates and their schooling should prepare them to meet these expectations

The goal of significantly increasing the numbers of students with a second language facility will require a significant change in the way language learning is delivered across Australia. Most systems have failed abysmally to produce large cohorts of proficient second language users. Resources are inadequate, qualified teachers of LOTE are scarce, opportunities to use second languages are limited, a culture of valuing a second language does not exist. Untangling what are the causes and what are the symptoms of this failure to ignite students' interest in second language learning is complex. One thing that stands out though is that we are one of the few countries where over forty languages are being taught in schools. Most counties offer and/or require the development of competence in one common second language (usually English) or two (English and the official language) where there is a large population with a mother tongue that is different to the country's official language.

In order to experience some success at promoting the widespread acquisition of a second language, we need to confine second language learning to a small set of instructional languages (e.g. 2 Asian and 2 European only) so that same second language communities of students can be established in a locality (a community of learners is necessary so students can practice their skills by talking to each other), so that the training of language teachers can be targeted and so resources are concentrated on a narrow field of languages enabling instructional materials to become ubiquitous and of high quality. Secondly, conversation should be identified as the lead skill to be developed by second language teachers.

Finally, assessment regimes will also need to be revised. In the senior years open-book exams and the use of multiple resources which need to be analysed and responded to by students should become more commonplace assessment modes. Lower down the school, assessment by exhibition should be given more prominence. Similarly, as students become more immersed in learning with technologies (whilst we are still at a very primitive stage in this regard, we may not be in five to ten years time), this will need to be reflected in course design, in the kinds of learning tasks that are set and in the way that knowledge and skills are assessed. Pen and paper assessments of learning based around 'digital' knowledge and skills cannot and should not be sustained for much longer. As has already happened in some states, student reports will need to include statements of achievement standards in 'soft skills' areas and/or 'compliance' statements related to satisfactory participation in such things as service work, a work placement and community or team-based work.

**COACTEA
APPLICATION FOR FUNDING FORM 2007**

Name of Association

Contact Details:

Name:.....

Address:.....

Phone:Fax: Email:

PROPOSAL DETAILS

Amount Requested:

Requirements:

Successful applicants are required to submit a short report, including expenditure of funding, to the COACTEA Committee within **three** months of the project activity. The report should be signed by an executive member of the association.

COACTEA sponsorship should be acknowledged in advertising material and reporting.

Applicants must have Public Liability Cover to be eligible for funding.

Please provide details of Public Liability cover:

Signature:

For COACTEA office use only

Committee ApprovalSignature.....

COACTEA Committee for 2007

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Committee Member	Sue Harding	Macquarie Primary School	6205 6077	6205 6333
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Linking Latitudes India, a conference that will take you places! September 30 - October 4, 2007

The importance of India to the world is not a new phenomena. ALBERT EINSTEIN said 'We owe a lot to the Indians, who taught us how to count, without which no worthwhile scientific discovery could have been made.'

The economic rise of China and India has drawn our attention to the opportunities and challenges ahead.

India - the world's largest democracy, the largest English speaking nation, the second largest pool of engineers and scientists, a middle class of over 240 million people and more income millionaires than the whole population of Australia - much of this is unknown to many Australians.

Are you confident and knowledgeable about how to equip your students to become citizens of the region and world?

Take the lead and take a journey and prepare your students for the 21st Century.

This exciting and relevant Conference will occur over five days in New Delhi and Agra from September 30 to October 4, 2007. Seventeen pre and post-conference fieldwork programs to a range of sites in India will extend learning.

As a special offer to COACTEA member associations, the AEF will extend the Early Bird Registration to **June 11, 2007**. Members that register by this time will be put in the draw to win a free **international airfare to India** or one of **50 free Lonely Planet books**.

If you wish to discuss how you and your professional association can further support Linking Latitude India Conference, please don't hesitate to call Maureen Welch Conference Convener on 03 83443594 or email me at: m.welch@asialink.unimelb.edu.au

Electronic copies are available at: http://www.asialink.unimelb.edu.au/our_work/school_education/international_programs