The Purposes of Education 3 Final Report

Abstract

This paper was developed to encourage and inform community debate about the purposes of schooling, especially public schooling, in Queensland, over the next decade. It is about the purposes or aims of education. The paper is structured in two parts:

Part A explores different professional and community perspectives on the purposes of education generally and schooling specifically. It considers how educational purposes have been thought about over time and in different places through the eyes of different cultures.

Part B sets out a more prescriptive outline argument of what should be the purposes of schooling in Queensland for the next decade.

The Purposes of Education 3

A contribution to the discussion on

2010: Queensland State Education

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Summary

This paper is about the purposes or aims of education.

What should we expect from our educational institutions?

What ends should guide our educational choices and our communal investment in education?

What should educators be aiming for? And what expectations do parents have of schooling?

The paper has been commissioned and written to encourage and inform community debate about the purposes of schooling, especially public schooling, in Queensland over the next decade.

The paper uses a wide-angle lens. It considers the broad sweep of education and learning and then considers schooling within a landscape dominated by globalisation and its effects, plus the impact of new learning technologies and new communications media.

The debate about the purposes of public schooling in Queensland will need to take account of the complex nature of learning in the information age, the role of different educational institutions, how schools fit within an increasingly de-institutionalised learning environment, and the specific role and work of public schools.

The paper is structured in two parts. Part A explores different professional and community perspectives on the purposes of education generally and schooling specifically. It considers how educational purposes have been thought about over time and in different places through the eyes of different cultures. The paper emphasises that the purposes of education are always contested within any society and that all members of the Queensland community need to be involved in negotiating purposes suitable for the future in which young people will live.

Part B sets out a more prescriptive outline argument of what should be the purposes of schooling in Queensland for the next decade.

Part A notes that contemporary schools, like other major social institutions, are being forced to reinvent themselves. Boundaries between education sectors are blurring, and the need for lifelong learning is now well-understood but in Australia it still lacks a supportive policy framework.

Schooling, however, will always be the key incubator of the capacity for lifelong learning.

In preparing this paper, some 20 Queensland organisations, represented by over 70 people, were invited to comment on the question of what should be the purposes of education generally, and specifically what should be the purposes of schooling, especially public schooling, in Queensland.

An important finding was that the failure to articulate values and purposes is placing the Queensland public schooling system at a disadvantage relative to the private school system.

There is a widespread community perception that the current purposes of education include a focus on foundation skills, but that these are too narrowly oriented toward the 3 Rs.

From the community consultations there emerged a wider set of purposes for our educational future.

- The priority for those consulted was that schooling should prepare the young for community life.
- Stakeholders also believe education should prepare the young for citizenship in the widest sense.
- Preparation for participation in the economy and work also emerged as a prominent theme, but there is resistance from some educators to the entrenchment of vocational learning in schools.

- The need to prepare the young for lifelong learning amidst constant change was highlighted.

Part B formally proposes that:

> *Over the next decade, the overarching purposes of schooling in Queensland should be to prepare all young people to be active and reflective citizens of Australia, capable and keen to fully participate in and shape community, economic and political life in Queensland and beyond, able to confidently engage with other cultures at home and abroad, and with a disposition to lifelong learning.*

While the concept of citizenship has rightfully been revived in Australia in recent years, the prevailing interpretation remains narrow and relatively passive. Queensland should reclaim the concept in its widest sense as the central organising idea behind schooling over the next decade.

Another major change proposed is that vocational learning should now be regarded as one of the "basics" of education. The notion that vocational programs are second-best or only designed for those who do not fit the "academic" stream in schools is no longer tenable.

But we need a broad conception of vocational learning which goes beyond specific, immediate, work-ready occupational skills and encompasses problem-solving, creative thinking, and the capacity to develop entrepreneurial skills. Parents and the wider community rightfully expect that schooling will prepare the young for participation in the world of adult work.

The resistance of some educators to vocational learning in schools, on the ground that the educational ideal of self-fulfilment somehow precludes work skills, is no longer justified.

Finally, Part B of the paper says that in order to navigate the profound changes stemming from globalisation, young Australians will need both a clearer sense of their own identity as Australians and a far more sophisticated understanding of diverse cultures, both at home and abroad.

The paper notes survey research which shows that teachers, unlike some other professionals, have retained a relatively high standing in the community. This accumulated social capital is a big asset in the context of a major educational reform process such as that underway in Queensland.

Part A

Perspectives on Educational Purposes

The Institution We Call Education

All our traditional institutions, including work, education and the family, are being placed under extreme pressure by multiple forces, especially those arising from globalisation. In his now famous BBC Reith Lectures, Anthony Giddens said:

> *Everywhere we look, we see institutions that appear the same as they used to be from the outside, and carry the same names, but inside have become quite different. We continue to talk of the nation, the family, work, tradition, nature as if they were all the same as in the past. They are not. The outer shell remains, but inside all is different…They have become inadequate to the tasks they are called upon to perform.*[i]

Has education in Queensland become such a "shell institution"?

What goes on inside universities or TAFE or adult and community education centres or schools today is in many ways very different from what happened in them in the 1950s or 1960s.

Consultations in Queensland suggest that many parents, teachers, learners, businesses, politicians and communities see our educational institutions as increasingly inadequate. We need to be much clearer about what we can reasonably expect them to perform, and to do this, we must understand the changing nature of what we call education.

The word *education* has no fixed essential meaning. It is a complex, evolving concept, shaped by the norms prevailing at a given time and in a given place. In Australia and other liberal democracies we distinguish between education and indoctrination. The distinction is not universal but it does capture the qualities we expect of an educated person – rationality, critical reflection, breadth of intellectual interest, commitment to truth, and independent thinking.

For administrative reasons, *education* is often described in terms of the institutions or organisations which provide it. It has often been seen as taking three forms: formal, informal and non-formal.

- **Formal education** is organised educational activity and is usually linked with schools, vocational education and training institutions and universities. There are other sources of formal education which are usually overlooked – Aboriginal elders educating for initiation and religious institutions educating for rites of passage such as confirmation or Bar Mitzvah.

- **Non-formal education** is described as organised educational activity outside formal systems and linked with community groups and organisations such as religious bodies, Indigenous communities, Neighbourhood Houses, the University of the Third Age, and the like.

- **Informal education** is a conversational rather than a curriculum-based form of education and describes learning through interactions with friends, neighbours and work colleagues, or through, say, debating societies, public libraries, galleries and museums. In informal education, families are a key educational site. Pestalozzi once wrote that *within the living room of every household are* united the basic elements of all true human education in its whole range. Informal education is considered a lifelong thing, hence rather unpredictable.

  Informal education has a very long history, but Paulo Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* published in 1972 helped foster a wider recognition of learning through dialogue. It also highlighted the contrast between education forms which treat people as objects, not subjects.

sectoral boundaries are increasingly blurred

In Australia we have four *formal* education sectors: adult and community education; higher education; vocational education and training, and schooling (including pre-schooling but excluding childcare).

These distinctions have all had their uses. They help governments apply rules about who will fund what, and they give specialist educators a way to define and differentiate themselves from non-specialists such as parents or work supervisors. But a striking feature of the last twenty-five years has been a blurring of the different forms of education and its so-called sectors. We now see more cooperation (and competition) between sectors.
In some states TAFE institutes have been merged with universities. Adult and community education delivers accredited vocational education and training courses and programs for youth at risk. Schools no longer confine their services to people 18 years or under. Sharp distinctions between primary and secondary schooling and between lower and upper secondary schooling are less meaningful. TAFE and upper secondary schools are merging, and more universities provide TAFE-type courses.

Learners are on the move

Learners are no longer confined by sectoral boundaries to straight-line pathways. University graduates undertake TAFE study following or parallel with their higher education studies. Year 11-12 students undertake vocational education and training programs in their regular time-table, including part-time traineeships. School-age students are being home-schooled. Credit transfers between schools, TAFE, universities and adult and community education centres provide multiple pathways for learners.

formal education is becoming less institutionalised

In 1971, Ivan Illich's *Deschooling Society* provided a very influential statement about the negative effects of schooling. He argued for the disestablishment of schooling and the creation of learning webs.

> *A good educational system should have three purposes: it should provide all who want to learn with access to available resources at any time in their lives; empower*

all who want to share what they know to find those who want to learn it from them; and, finally, furnish all who want to present an issue to the public with the opportunity to make their challenge known. Such a system would require the application of a constitutional guarantee to education.[ii]

While seen as radical in its day, many of Illich's ideas now seem prescient, especially in light of Internet-based interactive learning, the popularity of the concept of lifelong learning, and the idea of a youth guarantee.

The 'de-institutionalisation' of education is evident in other ways. Multinational companies have set up their own universities. In Australia, some companies have set up university-linked institutes for their staff training. TAFE now competes with private training firms. More formal education occurs outside the classroom - in workplaces, trains, community houses, in cyberspace.

learners have become more demanding

The consumer movement has made people of all ages far more demanding. Unquestioned faith in specialist educators, formal or informal, has given way to a more realistic view that the teacher-learner relationship is a two-way street. Many learners now view education as a right rather than a privilege and are more willing to assert their rights and challenge professional prerogatives.

educational institutions are reinventing themselves

Many educational institutions are working hard to become more flexible and responsive. In each sector, the industrial-age model of 'one size fits all' is being discarded to serve more diverse clienteles. The result is greater differentiation between institutions in each sector. Almost all educational institutions are striving to reach a new balance between their social responsibilities, their role as vital cultural institutions and the imperatives of new technologies and new economies. In short, they are reinventing themselves.

What we have always called *education* is therefore changing, not just in Australia but world-wide. Like our other key institutions of family, work and government, we are reinventing education. And in thinking about the purposes of education for our future, we must be explicit about the purposes of our intended reinvention. A policy of conceptual drift is not acceptable.

Learning and Education

The second pattern evident in the past twenty-five years is the subtle shift from a pre-occupation with education as an institution to an increased emphasis on an expanded concept of learning.

> *To educate is to get people to learn. Any educational system is a system for promoting learning. Teachers are not, as such, social workers or therapists or community workers or child carers – although they may de facto be forced into any one or more of these roles; their expertise lies in being able, through training and experience, to help people, particularly children, to learn. [iii]*

Most specialist educators have traditionally focused on the role of formal education in providing teaching which may or may not result in learning. Marilyn McMeniman notes that formal education sites are *…very powerful contexts in which attitudes are shaped, goals set, and knowledge and skills gained.* But she also notes that…*only 30% of what we learn occurs in formal settings such as schools, educational institutions.* [iv]

Carmen Luke reminds us of other sources of 70% of our learning:

TV is today's mass social educator with powerful influence on social life, people's worldviews, consumer behaviour and the shaping of public sentiment… In Australia, 99% of all households own a TV set, 60% own two or more sets, and 72% of all TV households own a VCR .. Television takes up more of children's time than any other activity except sleeping, and school aged children watch on average between 18-30 hours a week. Many children watch a lot more, and many watch far less. By age 18, the average viewer has watched some 14,000 hours of TV, and yet during that same time has spent only 12,000 hours in classrooms in front of teachers and texts (Luke, 1990). These figures do not include time spent reading comic books and magazines, playing video games, or playing with media spin-off toys...[v]

The message is that in our discussions about the purposes of education, we must consider the many ways people learn, the differences between schooling and education and the influence of non-educational institutions in shaping what we learn. There are multiple pathways to knowledge, to understanding, to literacy, to skills in society. New technologies make these pathways increasingly complex, risky and very tricky for specialist educators and parents alike.

Also, the concept of learning is rapidly changing. 'Lifelong learning' now encompasses formal, non-formal and informal education, putting learners and learning, rather than education and educators, at its centre.

In the past, we thought education stopped in a person's mid-20s. But globalisation, new information and communications technologies, changing work practices and the transition to an age of knowledge mean we can no longer rely on a stock of knowledge acquired in our youth. Learning will need to be continuous.[vi]

In 1971 UNESCO set up the International Commission on the Development of Education, chaired by Edgar Faure. Its report, *Learning to Be,* was a visionary document, recommending that lifelong education should become …*the master concept for educational policies in the years to come for both developed and developing countries.*

The European Lifelong Learning Initiative has provided a broad definition:

Lifelong learning is a continuously supportive process which stimulates and empowers individuals to acquire all the knowledge, values, skills, and understanding they will require throughout their lifetimes and to apply them with confidence, creativity and enjoyment in all roles, circumstances and environments.[vii]

The development of a learning culture to support lifelong learning has been a major thrust in European nations in recent years. The first report of the UK National Advisory Group for Continuing Education and Lifelong Learning captured this intent:

A learning culture will not confine learning to particular places, methods or forms of learning. However, those institutions such as schools, colleges and universities which are specially charged with responsibility for stimulating a love of learning and facilitating achievement amongst their members will be judged in part for their effectiveness in promoting and sustaining learning for all. In addition, however, the learning culture we envisage will extend to all kinds and varieties of homes and families, to places of paid employment, to voluntary and community settings and to the realms of leisure, culture, recreation and the arts. In making lifelong learning for all normal, the media of broadcasting and communications will also accept their own responsibilities for the promotion of accessible and engaging learning

In Australia, much rhetoric surrounds lifelong learning but there is as yet no policy framework to support it. But it cannot be dismissed as just a fad. It has now been around for some time: as one Queensland community organisation said in our

consultations, education is …*a 'whole of life' notion. Education is about travelling through life.*
Moreover, schooling must remain the foundation of the capacity for lifelong learning.[viii]

The Fundamental Question

What ought to be the purposes of education?
This has been a recurring question in the Western liberal tradition of which Australia is a part, and other traditions, too. It can be traced back over 2000 years to philosophers like Confucius, Socrates, Plato and Aristotle.
More than two millennia of thinking about educational purposes provides us with a rich lode of wisdom to mine. But there are two risks in attempting to draw on such an inheritance.
One is that we fail to see that the purposes of education are always socially constructed. Purposes for the next decade can only be based in our current circumstances and our preferred futures. A second risk is that the sheer weight of history may make us incapable of fresh thinking.
Also, we delude ourselves if we think that answers to the question of educational purposes are simply professional or technical. Decisions on the purposes of any educational system or institution for that matter, and decisions on publicly funded schooling, are ultimately political. This does not mean party political or even governmental; it means decisions on how Australians should live together in the future and how different values should be accommodated.
The process of clarifying the ends and reinventing the means of education needs a starting point. The soundest starting point is community-wide discussion, which should facilitate a negotiated community settlement on the future purposes of public schooling in Queensland.

Community perspectives

In preparing this paper, some 20 Queensland organisations, represented by over 70 people, offered their opinion on whether the question *What are the purposes of education?* is worth asking. Their responses fell into three categories: 'yes', 'no', and 'it depends'.
Those who believe it is a question worth asking said:

> *A statement of purpose helps set a direction. (Teachers' Association)*

> *The failure to articulate purposes leads us up blind alleys. (Government official)*

> *We need a bipartisan approach so there is some stability to this direction… All kids go through schools therefore each political party wants a say in what is learnt. (Teachers' Association)*

Those who said 'no' saw the question as too abstract, given the big pressures on teachers and schools.

> *It is difficult to be new or definitive on the aims of education – it is doomed to fail – it will be by-passed – no one will care what the statement is. A better question is "what should an education system be doing?" (Teachers' Association)*

A third group said that doing something practical with the answer was the more important issue:

> *The purpose of education must be embedded – not just words. There needs to be a commitment to implementation or it will just be like every other attempt – which becomes tinkering at the edges This should make a difference for teachers in the*

classroom – nothing has happened for 20 years and real change comes from individual teachers in the classroom. But it must also engage everyone through to the D-G and the Minister (Teachers' Association)

The essential ingredients of a purpose statement is the who, what, how – it should be a statement of strategic intent. It should stress the value of kids and the mutual respect in the parent-teacher-student relationship. (Parents' Association)

We need to close the gap between the purpose and the main game. (Teachers' Association)

Personal fulfilment and contribution to society are fine as global perspectives. Where this connects with action is the problem and how Education Queensland does this is where the problem occurs. The purpose isn't the problem. (Academic)

These last comments illustrate a perennial conflict in formal education:

Philosophers are more interested in making maps, while teachers are more interested in   getting somewhere. But of course, you make better maps if you try to use them, and you find a journey easier with a good map.[ix]

A question worth asking

Considering these views and the literature, there are three reasons why it is essential to debate the question of educational purposes, particularly schooling.

Reason 1: For Accountability

The idea that educational systems, institutions and the teaching profession should be accountable is an ancient one. The Greek moralist Plutarch in the 1st century had a narrow version:

Some fathers who, after entrusting their sons to attendants and masters, do not themselves take cognisance at all of their instruction by means of their own eyes or their own ears. Herein they most fail in their duty; for they ought themselves every few days to test their children, and not rest their hopes upon the disposition of a hired person; for even those persons will devote more attention to the children if they know they must from time to time render an account.[x]

Closer to home, accountability came to the fore following the publication of *Schools in Australia*, the Report of the Interim Committee for the Australian Schools Commission in 1973, when D'Cruz of the Institute of Catholic Education in Victoria argued for the need for wide interpretation, one going beyond easily measured behavioural aspects of education.[xi]
Accountability today is a matter of concern to governments everywhere. Educational institutions are morally and politically accountable to those who pay for their services and to their students.[xii] Increasingly, enterprises, taxpayers, parents and even students are calling the experts to account. Today, citizens are more questioning than their parents a generation ago.
But accountable for what? Can universities be held accountable for ethical failures of doctors, or for law students dropping out to become taxi drivers? Can TAFE institutes be held accountable for breaches of public health and safety standards by laboratory technicians? Can schools be held accountable for literacy or numeracy levels? Can they be held accountable for drug dependency?
The answer partly depends on what educational institutions aim to do; if institutions never make their purposes explicit, accountability can be easily avoided. In Australia

today, the formal purposes of public education have to be restricted to those social and academic purposes for which publicly funded educational institutions can reasonably be held accountable.

On the accountability of public schools specifically, one stakeholder noted: *…schools merely assist with outcomes. They play a big part, but not the only part.*

Often, it is true, public schools are blamed for social consequences they do not directly cause and cannot 'solve'. When politicians, communities and the media look for simple causes of complex social problems, knee-jerk reforms can easily result. It is not reasonable to hold public schools accountable for systemic, structural social problems or their solution. It takes a whole community to educate a child, and public schools cannot do their job if they operate in isolation. But it is reasonable to hold public schools, perhaps all schools, accountable for the extent to which they work in partnership with their communities.

Schools must analyse, weigh and negotiate community needs. If public schooling is about making a difference for children and for different communities, schools must be able to show how they are making such a difference. But this requires a concept of accountability which transcends that which can easily be measured by a battery of tests.

Reason 2: For Coherence and Direction

The groups consulted for this paper were unanimous in calling for an end to fads in schooling. There is a widespread perception in Queensland that schooling moves from one fashion to another, according to the whims of politicians or professional educators. Without any guiding principles or purposes, there is no way of assessing the merits of proposed reforms, and community confidence in schools and the educational reform process can be undermined:

> *What is needed is something to guide policy-making and teachers as they go about their jobs. There is a lot of goodwill in Education Queensland but no direction. (Government official)*

> *Because there is a policy vacuum we have followed others' developments without ever really thinking about policy. (Government official)*

Our consultations yielded many good ideas ranging from the need for entrepreneurial skills to bringing children with disabilities into the mainstream; from more Classics to a recognition of Indigenous home languages. Lists are useful, but how useful? Stephen Fitzgerald challenges us on this point:

> *It is obviously not enough just to debate the issues or set an agenda. An agenda, after all, is merely a list of things to do, the business of the day. What is in question is more like a matter of belief. Why do we not talk of setting an educational philosophy for the next several decades? Then we would have to focus on the intellect rather than merely drawing up strategies and programs – the common stuff of agendas. I wonder if we are not afraid of using our intellects in this way… [xiii]*

A statement of educational purposes has the potential to give coherence and direction to any education system or institution – but only if it goes beyond feel-good rhetoric and is then linked with practical decision-making.

The diagram below, prepared by the INCA Project of the National Foundation for Educational Research in England and Wales, illustrates how our aims can inform our subsequent choices about school structures, school and class organisation, curriculum, teaching styles and materials, assessment and the intended and unintended outcomes.[xiv]
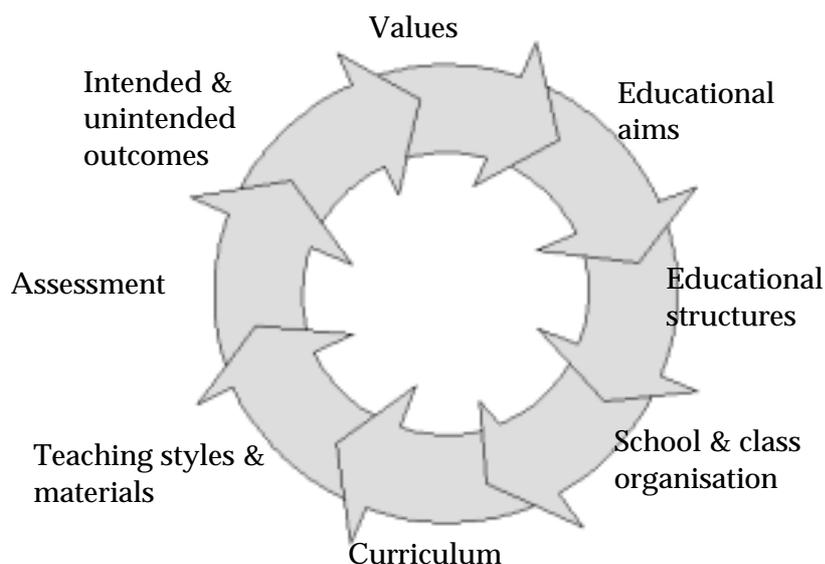
Such a diagram implies a tidy decision making process, but in practice even the best-planned systems are not so logical. As everyone involved knows, a big gap often exists between high rhetoric and the nuts and bolts of teaching and learning. The diagram also raises the issue of values – our beliefs about desirable educational *ends* (such as individual freedom, wisdom, socialisation, self-fulfilment, self-actualisation, critical thinking, citizenship, democracy, equity) or *means to ends* (such as quality, equal access, competition, diversity, testing, streaming, parental choice, privatisation).

As Australians, most of us share common values about a fair go, justice, tolerance, social cohesion, environmental sustainability, and so forth. Beyond this, though, our values become increasingly diverse in their practical application. We fund different educational systems because we value religious freedom, free speech, individual self-determination, and educational choice.

In our pluralist society, it is not possible to arrive at a set of educational values shared by all Australians. No single 'representative' or 'stakeholder' can speak on behalf of us all. The Catholic school system may reach a statement on its shared values; so may the independent or grammar schools. But this is only possible through *negotiation*.

Equally, governments must articulate, following negotiations with their publics, the values that will underpin public schools. In Queensland at present, this failure to articulate values places the public schooling system at a disadvantage relative to other school systems:

> *…research shows the absence of overt values are one of the major reasons for exodus from the public schools. The private schools seem to have very clear values.*
> *(Teachers' Association)*

While the INCA diagram suggests a simple cause-effect relationship between values and purposes, reality is not so neat. Values and purposes are interconnected. And values and purpose also interact with practice in different ways. When we say, for example, that we believe in a fair go for all children, practice can say something quite different, as Jackie Huggins, the Aboriginal activist and historian, found:

> *In year 10 at high school I saw the senior mistress to discuss future schooling and other vocational options: I told her I'd like to complete Year 12. She laughed: "Oh but you couldn't possibly do that!" My grades were good and I was taken aback.*

> *Bewildered, I asked her why not. "Because you're Aboriginal and Aboriginals have got no brains. I felt dehumanised and powerless, At fifteen years old I had neither the words nor the guts to challenge her…I crawled out of the office, my dreams shattered.*[xv]

Being clear about educational purposes will give us a broad direction and help make our decision-making more coherent. But we need to accept that there will always be tensions between different values and ends, and between purposes and practice. This is the inevitably contested nature of education.

Reason 3: For Democracy

In a pluralist democratic society, many legitimate interests must be accommodated in a negotiated community settlement on the purposes of publicly funded education. When changes are made without an effort to make assumptions explicit, a backlash may be inevitable, as happened with the recent rise of One Nation. Similarly, the worldwide trend against 'political correctness' cannot be dismissed as merely conservatives trying to re-capture the liberal education agenda. It represents a failure of liberal educators to negotiate with those of other dispositions and a failure of non-liberals to accept that their views may be unacceptable to others.
Christopher Winch warns:

> *A society that fails to articulate or even to get clear about the aims of its education system will most likely enjoy a second-rate one, because some of the most substantial interests in society will not have a chance to articulate what they want from education, thus losing the chance that their interests will be represented, leading to a danger of disillusion and contempt for the institution of education itself. The formulation of aims for public education systems is, therefore, a vital task for any democratic society which aims to have an effective education system that commands the confidence of all sections of the population.*[xvi]

The issue is not a theoretical one. The 1978 debate in Queensland on the use of the social science courses: Man: A Course of Study (MACOS) and Social Education Materials Project (SEMP) in public schools is a classic example of a bitter ideological struggle for control of educational policy and practice by a vocal alliance of conservative, religious and fundamentalist pressure groups. The *Gold Coast Bulletin* reported Rona Joyner, an alliance spokesperson, as saying *Children don't go to school to learn to think. They go to learn to read and write and spell correctly.*[xvii] When the aims of public schooling are not made explicit, such extreme minority views can prevail with divisive consequences.

Different Times, Different Purposes

The Governor-General, Sir William Deane, has reminded us that *…the past is never fully gone. It is absorbed into the present and the future. It stays to shape what we are and what we do.*[xviii]
Philosophers in all cultural traditions – Eastern, Western, Islamic, Hindu, Buddhist and African to name a few - have long been concerned with education. In our own dominant Western tradition, ideas drawn from Ancient Greece, reflecting on the works of Plato and Aristotle dealing with virtue, the good life and a life worth living, continue to influence education down to the present.
One example is the demarcation between general education and vocational training which continues to complicate the place of vocational education and training in our schools.

In the Renaissance Period, consider the influence of the Czech philosopher Comenius, who argued for education for all as a means of creating a harmonious and creative community.[xix]

Rousseau's books *Emile* and *The Social Contract (*1762), have been among the most influential in the history of education.[xx] The ideas of progressive 19th century educators such as Montessori, Froebel and Pestalozzi were influenced by Rousseau's vision of children, not as incomplete adults to be moulded, but as young people with their own ways and goals. This in turn stimulated the birth of the kindergarten and moulded early childhood and primary education in their current forms.

It was in the 19th century that thinking specifically about education and its aims really accelerated, in response to the transition from an agricultural to an industrial age and the rise of universal schooling. The writings of John Dewey are perhaps the biggest single influence on 20th century educational theory and teaching practice in English-speaking countries, including Australia.

Dewey reminded us that it is actual people – parents and teachers in particular – who have aims, not "education" as such. He cautioned against the careless imposition of aims from outside, a point of continuing relevance in the context of this paper.[xxi]

Despite continued interest in progressive education, discussion of educational aims came to be dominated in the 1960s and 1970s by the London School of analytic philosophy, especially the work of R.S.Peters. In contrast with Dewey's social approach, this dry analytic approach has been a contributing factor in the decline of interest in the philosophy of education.

Some common themes emerge in any historical survey of debate on the purposes of education, as rendered by Paul Standish: *first, to serve the needs of society; second, to pass on and develop those ways of knowing and understanding which are the common heritage; third, to help individual learners to develop…*[xxii]

Another synthesis by Graham Haydon identified three strands in thinking about the aims of education.[xxiii] The first is aims concerning qualities seen as **intrinsically good**. Calls to the intrinsic value of some fields of knowledge and skill have often underpinned our curriculum decisions.

But as one Queensland stakeholder understandably observed:

> *…the curriculum development by the BSSS provides a broad human liberal education where knowledge and the key competencies are valuable for their own sake. We need to push the boundaries out of the liberal approach and ask the question, what does this mean for us?*

A second strand emphasises aims relating to promoting the **good of the individual**, the good being either enhancing quality of life or serving an instrumental end such as employment – or in some circles, individual competitiveness as a pre-requisite for the good life.

In Queensland schools, great importance is placed on one side of the good of the individual student – on personal fulfilment, self-realisation, autonomy and individual quality of life generally. There is clear resistance to the other side of the coin - claims that vocational learning is good for both the individual and society. Either way, the chosen emphasis needs to be justified.

The third strand emphasises aims concerning the **good of society**. Politicians often think about education's aim as promoting, say, economic growth and competitiveness, when education can have a far wider meaning, related to society as a civil society or the enrichment of social capital.

Whether 'a good life' can be best promoted by an education focused on the individual or on the community continues to be the subject of vigorous debate. The debate cannot be settled for all time, only for a particular time and place.

We also know that this moment of history is one in which tensions around purposes are becoming more apparent, and the individualistic emphasis of Western liberal education is under challenge. The last quarter of the 20th century has seen the philosophy of education fragmenting as disciplines such as sociology or cultural studies or cognitive psychology are seen as more relevant than traditional philosophical inquiry alone. In this climate, there is great scepticism about all-embracing universal ideas such as virtue, truth, progress, the good life, happiness or excellence as ideals for which education systems everywhere should strive.

Yet there is one significant contemporary convergence around the ideal of critical thinking.

William Hare says …*critical thinking has received far more attention over the past two decades than any other educational aim.*[xxiv] Critical thinking has become the focus of a reform movement in which theory is deeply interconnected with innovative curriculum and pedagogy.[xxv] Part of its appeal lies in its ability to span the separation of theory and practice.

Hare warns of the dangers of searching for succinct definitions, citing William Kennick's comment that when one feels the need for a definition, lie down until the feeling passes.

Nevertheless, for the purposes of this paper, critical thinking is about good thinking, closely connected with the application of reason to claims, evidence and assumptions in an open-minded rather than sceptical way. Good thinking requires a critical spirit and a creative imagination.

Since John Stuart Mill and Immanuel Kant, or even back to Socrates, many philosophers of education have been concerned with good thinking. John Dewey and Australia's John Passmore have made major contributions to the foundations of philosophising about critical thinking. But Robert Ennis's book, *A Concept of Critical Thinking* (1962) really triggered this modern debate.

But critical thinking is not without its critics! Objections are raised against it as a universal ideal on the grounds that it is culturally biased and that critical thinking is not central to all cultures. Some say its conceptualisation is too individualistic, that dialogue and community should figure more prominently.[xxvi] Others claim it is gender-biased. Richard Rorty has argued that critical thinking is not a suitable aim before university level education.

As with all other propositions about educational aims, however, critical thinking has emerged in the particular historical context of the late 20th century. It acquired its name during the 1940s, when the "isms", communism, fascism and nazism, led to a quest to distinguish between education and indoctrination. But for many reasons it now seems better suited to the present. It steers a course between indoctrination and modern relativism and it provides for the needs for learners to acquire the skills for lifelong learning in uncertain futures.

> *…a government in a liberal democracy has good reasons to regard critical thinking…as an important aim of education. Such a government is rightly expected to establish and maintain a flourishing liberal-democratic political community. And living up to this expectation involves creating optimal conditions for helping children to become citizens who are able and willing to assess main lines of political policy and legislation in a critical way, as well as critically to attune their ideal of the good to the liberal framework of rights and duties.*[xxvii]

To close this section:
- contemporary debates about educational purposes in the Western liberal tradition keep returning to the broad family of philosophical concepts about self-determination, autonomy, wisdom, judgement and open-mindedness;
- our choice of purposes is inevitably shaped by our economic, political and social circumstances in which we make that choice; and

- the idea of critical thinking should inform the current debate about the purposes of education in Queensland over the coming decade.

Different Places, Different Purposes

In negotiating the purposes of education in Queensland, it is helpful to consider how different countries think about similar exercises. But one society cannot simply walk up to the global smorgasbord of purposes and choose a dish here and a dish there. A bad case of intellectual indigestion may result.

When looking abroad for wisdom, the challenge is to find how the experience of others can throw light back on ourselves and on what *we* want to achieve in the next decade and beyond. Comparative studies of education are again fashionable. Regrettably, though, this fashion is not driven by genuine cultural curiosity but by anxiety about our international competitiveness.

An increasing number of international league tables permit nations and regions to compare the achievements of their children on national tests with those of children elsewhere. These are then used in some places to set national or regional goals for education. For example, the *GOALS 2000: Educate America Act* of 1994 included this goal:

> *By the year 2000 U.S. students will be first in the world in science and mathematics achievement.*

Here, as elsewhere, broad purposes and specific goals are merged into one and national goals for education are expressed as standards to be achieved. Purposes are reduced to measurable achievement standards, a process evident in the formulation of the *Common and Agreed National Goals for Schooling in Australia*. This is not to say that standards are unimportant for accountability purposes, but they can only be set in the light of what you are trying to achieve. We could perhaps beat the whole world in international literacy, numeracy, science and technology scores, yet at the same time have one of world's highest rates of youth suicide.

An interesting, ambitious comparative study was made by the National Foundation for Educational Research in England and Wales on behalf of the English School Curriculum and Assessment Authority. Its *International Review of Curriculum and Assessment Frameworks Project*[xxviii] compares the education systems of 16 countries, mainly but not entirely Western ones.

Known as *INCA*, these descriptions were compiled by collecting and summarising information from national authorities, research and wider literature on (a) national values and educational aims, (b) the educational and organisational contexts and (c) whole curriculum and assessment structures.

The table below compares the stated national aims of these 16 countries, including Australia. The Australian data was drawn from a range of sources, including the 1989 *Hobart Declaration on the Common and Agreed National Goals for Schooling*, which has since been superseded by the *Adelaide Declaration of 1999*, and from States and Territories including Queensland.

National Education Aims for 16 Selected Countries [xxix]

	Aust	Eng	Can	Fran	Germ	Hung	Italy	Japan	Korea	Neth	NZ	Sing	Spain	Swed	Switz	USA
Individual development	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Social development	•	•	•				•	•	•	•	•		•	•	•	•
Personal qualities	•	•	•				•	•		•	•	•	•	•	•	
Equal opportunity	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•		•
National economy	•	•	•				•	•	•	•		•	•	•		•
Preparation for work	•	•	•	•	•		•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•

	Aust	Eng	Can	Fran	Germ	Hung	Italy	Japan	Korea	Neth	NZ	Sing	Spain	Swed	Switz	USA
Basic skills	•	•	•				•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Foundation for further education	•	•	•	•	•		•		•	•	•	•	•		•	
Knowledge/skills/ understanding	•	•	•	•	•		•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Citizenship/ community/	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Cultural heritage/literacy	•		•				•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•		
Creativity	•		•				•	•	•	•		•				
Environment	•		•						•			•				
Health/physical/ leisure	•		•				•	•	•	•		•	•	•		
Lifelong education	•		•						•		•	•		•		
Parental participation	•		•				•			•	•	•		•	•	•

Note: Australia, Canada, Germany, Switzerland and the USA have devolved systems and there are regional and local variations.

The table suggests that only two aims are explicitly shared by all countries – the aim of individual development and the aim of citizenship/ community/democracy. These are indeed durable ideals.

Closer investigation suggests that similarities at the level of purposes become weaker when the relative weight placed on each aim is examined. Differences appear, too, in the means by which those ends are achieved: equal opportunity is an explicit aim in virtually all countries, yet they choose very different means to achieve it. The same applies to preparation for work.

A final point of comparison is very familiar in the Queensland context. Discrepancies occur between what the official stated aims are and those actually pursued by teachers and students. This reinforces the argument that aims have to be accepted by the teaching profession as well as the community if they are to find their way into the actual practice of schooling.

Such comparative studies can yield helpful insights into how educational things are done in other countries, but countries don't always equal cultures. Like most of the 16 nations in the *INCA* study, we increasingly hear about a globalising world. Some see it as Americanisation of the world, others refer to rampant Westernisation. Whatever the terminology, the assumption that Western ways of thinking and doing are universally applicable is being challenged.

One response has been the "Asian values" argument pressed by the former Prime Minister of Singapore, Lee Kuan Yew and Prime Minister Dr Mahathir Mohammad of Malaysia. Alleged Asian values such as consensus, harmony, unity, family solidarity and community are invoked to legitimise a certain political order while rejecting other political models on the grounds they are alien impositions.[xxx]

Another critique, specifically of the UNESCO-sponsored Delors Report, [xxxi] comes from Professor Konai Helu Thaman of the University of the South Pacific:

> *The Delors Report, like most reports that emanate from the international community, makes certain assumptions about people and their societies which, in my view, may be problematic if not inaccurate, with respect to most people who inhabit the Pacific Islands… For example, the Report assumes universal agreement on the meaning of Learning as well as Being. It also accepts the notion of a general morality as a given, the concept of human needs, and a needs-based ethic, as culture-free and neutral.*

While I appreciate the assertion that humans have a great deal in common, such as the need for affection, cooperation with others, a place in a community or help in trouble, I believe that these are inadequate as justification for the claim of universality and will, if not addressed, jeopardise the achievement of the educational goals of the Delors Report particularly in the Asia–Pacific Region, especially in the Pacific Islands. Because learning takes place within a cultural milieu and is conditioned by it, and because worthwhile learning has been going on in Pacific Island societies for thousands of years, there is an urgent need for us to understand what people in these societies and cultures perceive to be the purpose of learning, what is important to know and what makes a person learned or wise, as these, like the Delors Report itself, reflect basic cultural values and beliefs…[We need] a more flexible approach to the way we talk about learning and learning strategies, one that recognises the fact that values change and that non-Western, indigenous and vernacular notions of education need to have a place in global educational discourses.[xxxii]

Similarly, since Australia is geographically bound to East Asia, we need a more sophisticated understanding of what links our education to Asia and what may separate us from those cultures:

In the collectivist cultures of East Asia, education is viewed first and foremost as a measure of socialisation. It is an organised means by which children learn to adapt themselves to the expectations of the community. School education is designed to instil in children the norms and expectations of the society.

... cultures where individualism dominates, such as in many Western nations, tend to view education as a means of empowering children. The goal is to enable children to grow and respect themselves as individuals. Schools and parents encourage children to develop according to their unique needs and potentialities. Consequently education systems tend to honour individuality over conformity and individual ability over effort.[xxxiii]

Australia is a pluralist society and individual Australians hold many conflicting beliefs about the world and about education. While we have consciously pursued the educational purpose of individual autonomy and achievement, this is a culturally alien idea to Indigenous Australians:

In terms of achievement and competitiveness Europeans have a totally different concept to Aboriginal people of what these words mean. Individual achievement is important to Europeans but is a cultural barrier to Aboriginal people, as kinship and social networks dictate an Aboriginal person's life and make it impossible for an Aboriginal to excel unless she or he assures their community that it is being done for them and not for the individual.[xxxiv]

One of the great challenges in moving into the 21st century is to democratically manage pluralism in all corners of our society, particularly education. This theme was stressed throughout our consultations in Queensland:

Social cohesion is of particular importance. The diffuse set of community values is one reason why we send kids to school for 12 years. Class and ethnicity differences are mainly a problem of inner urban locations. The cause is poor urban planning – there needs to be a better match and mix in the community to stop the division in schools which then require bussing to create mixed groups in all schools. (Government official)

There is an assumption that if we bundle up all the individual aspirations it will produce a cohesive society – but it won't. (Teachers' Association)

Diversity is not recognised and dealt with very well. Diversity is seen as difference and deficit rather than that each is different and part of a diverse community. Cohesion comes from recognition of sameness. If we valued creativity then diversity would have greater value. (Parents' Association)

40% of Australians come from elsewhere yet accept the Anglo-Saxon culture as predominant because we don't have roots in our own culture. Minimal multiculturalism should be protected by law including that our Indigenous culture came first and we must learn how to live together. (Community organisation)

There is genuine community anxiety that without a continuing effort to foster social cohesion, the pluralist base on which Australia now operates may fragment. So far, though, the reality of a pluralist Australia is holding up well despite significant divisive debates.

Finally, even if globalisation is driving a convergence of aims in education world-wide, it also strengthens the search for local and minority cultural identities, as Giddens notes:

Globalisation not only pulls upwards, it pushes downwards creating new pressures for local autonomy…

Globalisation is the reason for the revival of local cultural identities in different parts of the world. If one asks, for example, why the Scots want more independence in the UK, or why there is a strong separatist movement in Quebec, the answer is not to be found only in their cultural history. Local nationalisms spring up in response to globalising tendencies, as the hold of nation-states weakens.[xxxv]

Education reformers in Queensland would do well to understand this profound paradox.

Aspirations for the Future

In the consultations for this paper, some very clear messages emerged about the *current* purposes of schooling in Queensland. For one thing, there is an obvious gap in perceptions between what many in the education bureaucracy believe and what those in the field and the community believe:

There are many purposes stated in many documents. It is not a clean slate. They exist at various levels, in each school's partnership statements. There is the collective purpose of all of them, but they differ at different levels. P-3 would be different from Secondary. (Education Queensland official)

There is no corporate view of what is currently the purpose of education. It is a dog's breakfast. (Teachers' Association)

We have an expectation that students will learn the 3Rs and skills formation, that education will socialise kids to become full members of society, that it will reinforce societal and parental values and that it will provide networks of contacts and information. But this is not well articulated. (Government official)

new ideas about the 'basics' are emerging

There is a widespread community view that the current purposes emphasise grounding or foundation skills (assumed to be a core purpose of schooling) but that they are skewed towards the 3Rs, or particular ideas of the 3Rs:

> *The debate (about purposes) has been low level and focused on the 3Rs. (Community organisation)*

> *The current emphasis is on life skills, literacy, numeracy and employment skills, but all focus on conformity. (Government official)*

Employers, though, have a divergent view of current literacy levels:

> *…employer surveys show that concern about literacy is the biggest barrier to employment, together with attitude. Employers say kids are not socialised to work, are anti-authoritarian, expect to be entertained and believe that work is too dull. (Government official)*

And the emphasis on the 3Rs is challenged by some stakeholders:

> *The current focus on 3Rs instead of life skills is not an education for the future. (Government official)*

Judith Hancock, Headmistress of Brisbane Girls' Grammar, is worried about how we think about 'the basics':

> *…young people…come to school and they are put in a box and they are expected to learn in the same way that their parents or grandparents learned. Why should they add up and multiply in their heads of they don't need to? There are other skills for them now. I get very worried about the whole debate about back to basics. The 'basics' you need to survive in the world today are very different to what they were 20, 30 years ago.[xxxvi]*

Despite these divergent views, our consultations suggest there is much common ground about what might be preferred purposes for the next decade. Three distinct themes can be detected: preparation for adult life; inclusiveness; and critical thinking and independent judgement and action.

Theme 1: Preparation for adult life

There is a widely held view that the overarching purpose of schooling is about preparation for adult life and that, in the future, schools need to understand the diverse and often unpredictable lives for which young people are being prepared. This involves schools achieving a better balance between four aspects of future life: community life, citizenship, working life and a life of learning and change.

preparation for community life

The highest priority for almost all those consulted was preparation for community life.

> *The purpose of education is to produce individuals who can participate in their community in a useful way. There is a problem of a narrow focus on preparation for work-life or academic life – but we often miss out on community life. (Parents' Association)*

> *Community building, particularly in small isolated towns is of particular importance in Queensland because of its geography. (Teachers' Association)*

> *Education for relationships is important for social cohesion. (Government official)*

Maybe we need to understand community as a community of interests rather than a geographic community. (Community organisation)

Schools have a role [in creating community] because of community need but it is not their real purpose. Their core business is as educators but there is an expectation of a bigger role because they take all comers. This is difficult as they have accountability for educational outcomes. (Teachers' Association)

School is sometimes the first and only community some kids belong to. The purpose of state schools is to create community belonging. Money buys segregation – you can opt up through private schooling. (Teachers' Association)

School can be a hub but not responsible alone for creating community. (Teachers' Association)

preparation for citizenship

Closely related to the idea of community for stakeholders is the idea of citizenship. Citizenship was not used in a jingoistic or nationalistic sense, but more in the sense of active participation in public life.

If education is a key strategy to generate people who are not welfare dependent and able to function in the community then it needs to provide technical and conceptual skills and a grounding in citizenship skills. (Community organisation)

Citizenship skills are really important – it's not just about individual gain, people need to have skills for responsibilities, respect for diversity and recognition of their interdependence. Because institutions are no longer so relevant, individuals need to have the skills to build themselves. (Community organisation)

Citizenship: encompassing non-technical skills like ethics, responsibility for own actions, choosing governments, community accountability, consumer education, understanding what government can offer and the role of government, not Big Brother. (Government official)

preparation for working life

Preparation for working life emerged as a prominent theme. Stakeholders understand the broad nature of the new economies emerging through globalisation and Queensland's vital economic stake in this trend. Vocational learning for the young is becoming a stronger theme.

Education is increasingly about providing skills for the workforce. This push is coming from both Federal and State governments. There is at least recognition that the purpose is not just about preparing for tertiary education. (Teachers' Association)

But there are problems in the implementation of the aim of vocational learning:

- there is resistance amongst some educators to the idea that one of the purposes of education is to prepare young people for a working life and a reluctance by some educators to make that purpose (an aim of schooling since the industrial revolution) more explicit;

- there is significant dissatisfaction with a narrow interpretation of education for working life which is assumed to operate in Queensland state schools.

> *The problem is a welfare mentality and dependence on others for jobs, rather than making our own work. People are prepared to be employees rather than self-employed. Primary school teachers have no empathy for business – they think that the environment is OK, business is not. Most schools are producing industrial employees – not even preparation for the service sector where the growth is. Small business is the future, even big businesses are creating smaller business units. In an environment where the workforce is casualised and changing jobs is frequent, there is a need for highly adaptive people who are self-motivated. (Government official)*

> *The purposes must include entrepreneurial skills and enterprise skills (Government official)*

> *The trouble is that schools offer industry specific training when what is needed are the generic skills of the Mayer competencies. We currently have P-10 focus on generic skills (i.e. vocational learning) and Senior School focus on industry specific VET. This is problematic (Teachers' Association)*

> *The current push from ANTA is vocational education for all. But skills, adaptation, ability to be autonomous are more important. (Teachers' Association)*

preparation for a life of learning and change

Preparation for a life of learning amidst big changes emerged as a fourth dimension of preparation for adult life. All stakeholders were acutely conscious of the changing environment facing young people and they hope that schools will be able to help them manage and shape that change:

> *For people with disabilities, education is preparation for life away from school but there is no linkage because there is no common view of what the outcomes should be. These people will always be lifelong learners. (Teachers' Association)*

> *Schools will need to teach how to tackle futures – i.e. flexibility to tackle fast change and core conceptual skills that mean the individual can acquire a lifelong learning pattern to get technical skills. (Community organisation)*

> *To operate in a changing world we need some balances between broad based skills and more specialised technological skills. (Community organisation)*

> *An education for the reality of the future and visions with choices about life. Preparation for life that is still productive even if unemployed. We will need to move away from economic divisions as less work is shared among more people. (Government official)*

> *Learning which leads to a valuing of education and skills to mange their own learning process. Social participation and economic independence are priorities. Don't want "vegie" options which just keep kids at school, they must be contributing real skills. (Government official)*

Theme 2: The importance of inclusivesness

The second strand in the consultations was a concern for inclusiveness as an educational purpose, especially in a state school system. To achieve this, greater diversity between institutions was called for:

> *Education should provide for the individual needs of a diverse student population within which there are special groups. At present, there is a tendency to clump individuals with special needs in a group and the individual and their own special needs get lost. (Parents' Association)*

> *The State system must be comprehensive and cater for all, not residual and just for the "too hards". Education for all is a fundamental value in a democratic society. (Teachers' Association)*

> *In Australia, parents fear having a bright child. You don't have this problem in America. Why is withdrawal OK for remedial but not for gifted kids? (Parents' Association)*

Theme 3: Critical thinking and independent judgement and action

The third and final strand related to a view of some stakeholders that schooling needs to give greater emphasis to critical thinking and independent judgement and action. The implication was that young people need to be seen as active in creating the world rather than being empty vessels to be filled with pre-determined knowledge chosen by experts:

> *Schools should develop the individual to think critically and to analyse, to develop knowledge and skills. (Academic)*

Having examined educational purposes in other times, other places and other sectors, and having presented the perceptions and aspirational themes emerging from our consultations in Queensland, this paper now turns to the question of what should be the purposes of schooling in Queensland over the next decade.

Part B

Purposes of Schooling for the Next Decade

Proposition:

Over the next decade, the overarching purposes of schooling in Queensland should be to prepare all young people to be active and reflective citizens of Australia, capable and keen to fully participate in and shape community, economic and political life in Queensland and beyond, able to confidently engage with other cultures at home and abroad, and with a disposition to lifelong learning.

This proposition revolves around six key concepts: active citizenship as the organising concept; the ability and motivation to participate in and shape economic, community and political life as its expression; and engagement with other cultures and a disposition to lifelong learning as underpinning principles.

Before dealing with each of these in turn, a brief comment is necessary on the context in which the proposition is made, as foreshadowed in Part A of this paper.

Context

There is now no doubt that we are in a period of profound change – as significant as the change from hunting and gathering to the agricultural age, or from the agricultural age to the industrial age. As we travel to the knowledge or global age we are carrying a suitcase full of industrial age solutions. We have not yet made many new ones.

Families which moved from farms to cities at the start of the industrial revolution had little idea of what living in cities and working in factories meant - they made it up as they went along. But our position in this great transition is different. Communications and universal schooling have made it possible for each of us to have some insight into the changes, their causes and potential effects.

The transition will not be made in one short decade. It may take one or more generations and, even then, change will continue. The big challenge for education is to decide how best to equip people to navigate what Robert Theobald has called "the rapids of change".

So far, our thinking about the implications for education has been focused on what knowledge and skills the young will need to ride the rapids, and how new technologies can improve learning.

On the first point, we have not gone very far. Dr Victor Ordoñez, Director of UNESCO's Regional Office of Asia and the Pacific, has urged us to ponder what we should teach beyond foundation skills ('the basics') on which there is wide community and professional agreement.

"We tell children to go to school because it will be useful to prepare them for the future, but what if we have a wrong idea of the future? Looking at curriculum reform efforts, which are mostly reclassifying and rearranging old knowledge in familiar academic boxes or subjects, I get the impression that we think the future is

merely an extension of the present. Nothing could be more dangerous. Nothing could be more wrong.[xxxvii]

We are still excited by the new learning technologies themselves and have not got far in using them to enhance young people's learning as distinct from gathering and sharing information.

If schooling is preparation for an adult life to be lived in a turbulent transition where cultures, economies, nation-states, technologies and social institutions are changing fundamentally, young people will need to be prepared above all to be proactive in shaping those changes and adept in living with them. To do this, a revitalised form of schooling for active citizenship is required.

Citizenship

As Australians we can be proud of the fact that we live in one of the world's earliest, most robust and inclusive democracies. This was achieved by many factors, including educational institutions and especially public education. Our democracy has its faults and is not as inclusive as it should be but it is something we must preserve and expand.

Through citizenship we expect and seek freedom, social cohesion and economic prosperity in roughly equal measure.[xxxviii] Citizenship has many meanings and needs more precise definition. Karen Evans offers two views of citizenship:

> ***Minimal interpretations*** *[of citizenship] emphasise civil and legal status, rights and responsibilities, arising from membership of a community or society. The good citizen is law-abiding, public-spirited, exercises political involvement through voting for representatives. Citizenship is gained when civil and legal status is granted.*

> ***Maximal interpretations****, by contrast, entail consciousness of self as a member of a shared democratic culture, emphasise participatory approaches to political involvement and consider ways in which social disadvantage can undermine citizenship by denying people full participation in society in any significant sense.[xxxix]*

Citizenship has not exactly been at the forefront in Australia's political life.[xl] The concept was part of the debates leading to Federation in 1901 but it did not find its way into our constitution for many reasons.[xli] Only fifty years ago the first Citizenship Bill was introduced in Parliament.[xlii]

But citizenship has long been a concern in education – from Aristotle to John Dewey. Historically Australian schools have prepared young people for citizenship.[xliii] The first Australian textbook on citizenship was published in Victoria in 1917.[xliv] In the approach to the centenary of Federation, however, the issue has assumed new importance and urgency.

So far, it has been narrowly conceptualised in the *Common and Agreed National Goals for Schooling in Australia:*

> *wh*en students leave school, they should be active and informed citizens with an understanding and appreciation of Australia's system of government and civic life.

This minimalist, passive interpretation has tended to prevail in our schools, discussed in history or a limited civics courses. Such an approach will hardly prepare young people to ride the rapids.

Queensland must reclaim 'citizenship' in its maximalist sense as the central organising idea underpinning the purposes of schooling for the next decade.

Education for citizenship for the next millennium will involve the development of free,

active and equal Australians with the capacity to choose their identities, entitlements and duties in an agreed political and legal framework.[xlv]

Community Life

Management guru Peter Senge has said that when people have to go through a period of profound change, they cannot do it in isolation – they must do it together. In today's painful but exciting transition, perhaps we have instinctively recognised the need to make the transition together. Our language is increasingly infused with terms like 'community', 'school home', 'full service schooling', 'community-building', 'community resilience' 'social cohesion' and 'inclusiveness'.

Community here means not just geographic communities but any like-minded individuals joined by common purpose. We seem to be at a stage where individual freedom, a dominant idea since the early 1970s, is being re-balanced with interdependence.[xlvi] If so, schools must be re-balanced.

This is not an 'out with the old, in with the new' slogan. But from all the evidence, including the testimony of Queensland stakeholders, the status quo is unsustainable. Tinkering with the shell called school will not be enough to prepare young people for a good adult life in the new century.

This commonsense version of 'community' has arisen in the ranks of teachers, parents and government at the same time that much attention is being paid to the theoretical concepts of civil society and social capital. These ideas – community, civil society and social capital - are linked.

Civil society is not a new idea; it also goes back to Ancient Greece. But what civil society meant then is not what it means now. Here it refers to the zone of personal, family and community activities between markets on the one hand and government on the other. It is the zone of interest groups, social movements (the women's movement, the environment movement, residents' action, etc.), voluntary associations (P&Cs, trade unions, professional bodies, sporting or dance clubs) and non-profit institutions (some schools and colleges, universities, charities and religious bodies).

Some say civil society is autonomous. In truth, civil society *strives for autonomy* from government and markets but is influenced by both. Nor does civil society have visible boundaries. Rather it is a conceptual device by which we can discover important things about social life.[xlvii]

Social capital is a closely related idea which has emerged over the past decade.[xlviii] It is best thought of as the raw material or fuel for a civil society. In her 1995 Boyer lecture, Eva Cox said:

> *There are four major capital measures, one of which takes up far too much policy time and space. This is **financial capital**. **Physical capital** makes it onto the agenda because of the environmental movement. So there are fierce debates on trees, water, coal and what constitutes sustainable development… We occasionally mention **human capital** – the total of our skills and knowledge but rarely count its loss in unemployment.*
>
> *There has been too little attention paid to **social capital**…the processes between people which establish networks, norms, social trust and facilitate coordination and cooperation for mutual benefit. These processes are also known as social fabric or glue…[xlix]*

Social capital is embedded in relationships between people. It has the potential to help families, communities, regions or nations respond to change. Its potential is being explored by many, including the Prime Minister, who convened a round-table

on the subject in 1998. It also has resonance for developed and developing countries. Even the World Bank has embraced it.

But any promising idea can become useless if its meaning is not clear:

> *…the more social capital is celebrated for a growing list of wonderful effects, the less it has any distinct meaning. Social capital now appears poised to repeat the experiences suffered by other promising social science concepts in the past: from intellectual insight appropriated by policy pundits, to journalistic cliché, to eventual oblivion. It deserves better.[1]*

Bullen and Onyx, working with Neighbourhood and Community Centres, have researched social capital in five communities in NSW.[li] Some of their principal findings are that:

1. Social capital is an empirical concept

2. It is possible to measure social capital in local communities

3. There are eight distinct elements that appear to define social capital.

4. Four of the elements are about participation and connections in various arenas:

    5. Participation in local community

    6. Neighbourhood connections

    7. Family and friends connections

    8. Work connections

G. Four of the elements are the building blocks of social capital:

    1. Proactivity in a social context

    2. Feelings of trust and safety

    3. Tolerance of diversity

    4. Value of life

These elements are remarkably similar to some unstated aims of many Queensland state schools.

Central to the idea of social capital is trust, defined as *…a willingness to take risks in a social context based on the sense of confidence that others will respond as expected and will act in mutually supportive ways, or at least that others do not intend harm.*[lii]

Surveys show that as trust in politicians, the media and public officials has declined, trust in teachers (and nurses) remains high. Teachers thus have unusually rich stocks of one of the great building blocks of social capital. Wise educational institutions will foster this asset.

But there are risks in adapting social capital theory to preparing young people for community life. Much depends on whether rigour and resources are applied by politicians and policy-makers to translate the concept into meaningful policies. There is a risk we will fail the R&D test.[liii]

Second, much of the academic debate about civil society and social capital is couched in hopelessly romantic terms. To be credible in an educational context, the inevitability of conflict and contention must be acknowledged.

Third, civil society and social capital are sometimes used as a celebration of localism, of virtuous voluntary activity in streets, neighbourhoods, suburbs and towns. In reality, there is nothing necessarily liberating about the local. Membership of a community, while generating social capital, can also generate demands for conformity. Some undemocratic communities (neo-Nazi groups or paedophile networks, say) are probably quite rich in social capital.

This point is very important in relations between a head office and a local school. *In a public school, high-level purposes set for the whole state should be non-negotiable at the local level.*

Economic Life

If schools purport to prepare young people for adult life they must explicitly prepare them for participation in the economy. Indeed, schools have *always* prepared young people for economic life, even if they have done it bashfully.

In many schools, the formal curriculum retains the liberal ideal of education as self-fulfilment while a hidden curriculum prepares young people for a slot in the world of adult work. Many educators and even many business people are deeply ambivalent about the place of vocational learning in schools. Too often it has been seen as *residual*, as an activity suitable for those who do not fit into the "academic" stream. Universities remain reluctant to recognise it as real learning for university entry. Alternatively, distinctions are made between vocational education (learning about work) which is OK and vocational training (learning to work) which apparently is not OK.

This position is now untenable.

First, a great many parents earnestly hope that at the end of school, their children will find their way into the labour force and into a satisfying and rewarding job suited to their talents. They know traditional jobs are in short supply but do not expect schools to use that as an excuse for their children's indefinite economic dependence. When schools present vocational options as second-class options they are reinforcing parental anxiety that perhaps academic choices would be better, even if unsuitable, for their children. They are also denying their right to aspire for vocationally relevant learning for their child.

Second, business is a legitimate interest group in education. It is reasonable that business, as a taxpayer, will expect young people to leave school with the essential foundational capabilities (literacy including cultural and information literacy and numeracy) and, as part of that grounding, an orientation to self-discipline and the ability to exercise the rights and obligations of work.

Third, in a globalising world, governments everywhere are attempting to assure the national and international economic competitiveness of their region. At stake are jobs and prosperity. Governments want to create the conditions in which business and workers can thrive. That is what Australian citizens have long expected of their governments. And in the face of the knowledge age, governments have increasingly come to understand the need for an educated workforce.

This does not mean industrial-age occupational techniques alone. Rather, it means a workforce with a range of capabilities, including the ability to think creatively, to solve problems, and to develop entrepreneurial skills. Governments thus focus more on the schools-work interface.

Research indicates that vocational activities in schools have flow-on effects leading to increased maturation, a heightened sense of responsibility and improved behaviours in the classroom.[liv]

Finally, we do young people a disservice if we send them out to participate in working life without the basics with which to negotiate that life. We currently think about "the basics" as the 3Rs. But we now need to develop an expanded version – a foundational learning package.

The purposes of schooling into the next decade must therefore include a broad program of vocational learning. This does not simply mean an accredited course or a project or a workplace visit or even a touch of work experience. It means an understanding the workings of markets and the influence of the invisible hand, the helping hand and the grasping hand alike, on daily life.

The learning via part-time and even unpaid work that young people increasingly do outside schooling must now be closely supported by school learning. Among other things, they learn to appreciate that no form of work is pure pleasure and most work is at times frustrating or boring. They also learn how to make the transition from industrial-age command and control work to self-directed and team-based work. With the slow abandonment of the waged contract developed for the industrial age, it means learning to be self-employed, or what Charles Handy calls a **portfolio worker** – learning how to make jobs rather than just applying for or progressing through them.

Perhaps more controversially for many schools, it also means an element of job training, directed to young people in schools as a component of general education as a whole, and of foundation education in particular. ***Vocational learning must now become one of the new educational "basics".***

Political Life

Fundamental political changes are being brought about by globalisation.

We should be deeply troubled by what Giddens has called the democratic paradox – that even as more nations adopt forms of democratic government, the citizens in older democracies grow more disillusioned with their elected leaders. In the UK, 20 times more people belong to voluntary or self-help groups than to the political parties.[lv]

Still, people in the old democracies have not lost their general faith in democratic processes.

In his book *The End of Certainty,* the Australian journalist Paul Kelly has argued that the generation after Federation enshrined an 'Australian Settlement' which, despite its defects, served as the framework for national unity up to the mid-1980s when its irreversible decline became obvious. The Australian Settlement was based on five key ideas: White Australia, Industry Protection, Wage Arbitration, State Paternalism and Imperial Benevolence.

Australian State Paternalism is described as individual happiness through government intervention. Kelly argues that Australia was founded at a time when citizens demanded political rights and secure economic benefits from the state. While the triumph of democracy was comprehensive in Australia, …*it involved a greater fusion between the interests of the individual and the interests of the state than in most other nations.*[lvi]

Much of the anxiety seen in the Australian community in the past two decades has been caused by the breakdown of the Australian Settlement, brought on by globalisation and the struggle for a more inclusive democracy. The collapse of State Paternalism as an organising principle of Australian political life has not yet found a satisfactory replacement. Certainly economic rationalism has not become the replacement.

At the end of the 20th century we face two major political challenges in Australia – growing civic disengagement, especially amongst young people, and ambivalent relations between the individual citizen and governments. These are exacerbated by the information and communication revolution which allows citizens to have as much information as their MPs and which also opens up a gap between the information-rich and the information-poor.

The widening gap between rich and poor is also revealing political fault-lines. A pay expert, quoted in *The Economist* has noted the potential political effects:

> *Plato told Aristotle that no one should have more than five times the wealth of the lowest-paid member of society. The ratios of today would totally blow Plato away. Last year, the pay of a big-company chief executive was 350 times that of the average*

> *worker (in the US). In 2010, I project the gap will be that between Louis XVI and his workers – and you know what happened to Louis XVI.[lvii]*

Whatever else it does, education must foster what Anna Yeatman has called choice and voice in political life. Since individuals consent to the authority of democratic government, she sees choice and voice as:

> *…different kinds of consenting capacity of an individual. Individuals exercise choice when they elect a particular government, and the fairness of this result is assured by some method of majority vote. Individuals exercise voice when they seek to influence, either from within or without, how the government or public authority makes and implements policy. Choice presupposes that an individual confronts a given array of options, and chooses between them. Voice enables the individual to influence just what this array of options are to be, or how they are to operate.[lviii]*

There is a third political problem for citizens. It now seems that regional governments and nation-states may be losing some of their capacity to influence the direction of their own territory. As Daniel Bell has said, they become too small to solve the big problems yet too large to solve the small ones.
What might this all mean for schooling? We need education for voice and for choice. We need a disposition amongst young people to engage with their governments and the capacity to shape them. We need conflict resolution skills. We need to understand and work with political diversity at home, understanding other political systems and shaping Australia's foreign policy. Finally, we need to look for pedagogies and ways of organising schools which allow young people to want to learn how to participate.

Confident Engagement with Other Cultures

Stephen Fitzgerald has rightly argued that:

> *Until quite recently, the whole of our education from kindergarten to the end of university assumed that there was but one world of learning, one universe of intellectual activity and contributions to humankind, and that was the world of Europe and its derivatives (including the United States), which was the world of education in Britain when it was transplanted to Australia in the nineteenth century…[lix]*

The reality of globalisation, the rise of multinational companies larger than many nation-states and trans-national political entities such as the European Community or the slower emergence of the Asia-Pacific bloc, mean that more Australians will interact more with people from a wider range of cultural traditions.
Given Australia's cultural diversity, its relatively recent history of racial tolerance and our self-image as a people committed to a fair go, some foundations of such wider interaction are sound. But confident Australian engagement with other cultures will be a major challenge and will depend on becoming more confident about our own cultural identity, as well as learning how to understand multiple, different cultural traditions and identities.

our cultural identity as australians

First, confident engagement with other cultures relies on a clear sense of one's own identity, much as a growing child needs to learn via relationships how to differentiate self from non-self.
A key part of getting a clearer sense of what it means to be an Australian will inevitably involve Reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians. Patrick Dodson is right when he says that:

Australians of goodwill with a sense of justice, the majority, are looking for opportunities to reconcile our past and our present. They want to lay solid foundations for looking into the future – looking for what unites us rather than divides us. These Australians look back on the past as a way to the future, not wearing black armbands but neither wearing white blindfolds. They feel love for this country and hope for its future." [lx]

Young people will need to be able to evolve the Australian identity in ways which offer a respected place for all the cultural traditions here, not just the dominant Anglo-Western culture. The evolving Australian culture will necessarily be pluralist, recognising that individuals and groups are interdependent and that conflicts are best managed in an open-minded, constructive way.

Fitzgerald has also offered a glimpse of what might be possible in education:

By an Australia-centric education I mean an education which joins the intellectual and cultural and historical wellsprings of Australia: European, Aboriginal, Asian, and something which is ultimately larger, and which we can unashamedly call 'Australian'. This is important because to have such an education we have to have a strong sense of who we are. We have to be clear about the Australian identity, more than at any time in the past.[lxi]

other cultural traditions

A civilised country tries to understand its neighbours, even when disagreeing with some of their attitudes or practices. In the post-Cold War world, the quest for identity and community is a driving political force. Huntington has argued that the most important distinctions among peoples are no longer ideological, political, or economic, but cultural.[lxii]

Much of this identity politics is a reaction to the globalisation of capital and communications. But the real danger is that in the quest for cultural identity, science and reason will be replaced by unquestioned tradition, religious zealotry or romanticism. Two practical issues stand out here.

The first is what has been called 'Asia literacy': learning about and understanding traditions in our own Asia-Pacific region. Progress towards democracy in Indonesia and the likely economic and political influence of China, for example, will make our engagement with those nations a necessity for our own cultural and economic development. The bonds of trade are insufficient.

Nor will our own current uncertainty about the universality of human rights be sustainable. We remain ambivalent about whether we are or should be or could be an Asian nation. Alison Broinowski suggests we may need to distance ourselves from the Western identity which all Asian observers ascribe to us.[lxiii]

Such thinking lay behind the National Asian Languages and Studies in Australian Schools (NALSAS) strategy in 1994. In many ways, excellent progress has been made in Queensland, with more than 50% of Queensland's state schools offering in 1997 a continuous program in one or more of the four priority Asian languages. But choices of Asian studies and languages will need to go far beyond economic considerations to address cultural and educational ones. In the teaching of Indonesian, Queensland state schools lag far behind independent schools and even public schools in other States.

Second, Australian citizens will need a better understanding of other religious and spiritual traditions both within Australia and throughout the world and how those traditions shape social and political practice and inter-cultural relations in all avenues of life. In our own region, apart from Indigenous spirituality and its relationship with land, the strongest and most complex tradition is Islam.

In its various cultural forms, Islam is on the rise throughout the world and is likely to prove a major political and cultural force in the 21st century. Indonesia is the largest Islamic nation in the world and a number of other Southeast Asian nations are Islamic, most notably Malaysia. Research shows that those educated in the Judeo-Christian tradition generally fear Muslims. Moreover, our political system is based on a secular state and our education system generally separates secular and religious knowledge – liberal democratic principles rejected by Islam.

What might all this mean for schooling? The next generation of young people will need to be prepared to further evolve the Australian cultural identity, become secure in their sense of Australian-ness. This identity will come through an understanding our cultural origins, reconciliation with our past, and drawing strength from our cultural diversity. They will need communication and inter-cultural skills to enable them to make judgements about different cultural practices as well as to work in diverse cultural environments at home and abroad.

Above all, young people leaving school in 2010 will need to have learned to be cosmopolitan.

A Disposition to Lifelong Learning

As foreshadowed in Part A of this paper, there are two ways of thinking about lifelong learning in the knowledge age. The *First Report of the National Advisory Group for Continuing Education and Lifelong Learning* in the UK described these as follows:

> *It is through school that children develop basic and core skills, initial standards and knowledge. For lifelong learning, it is at this stage of their life that they can also acquire two further essential characteristics. The first is learning how to* learn, *so that as they meet new areas of knowledge and new problems to solve they know how to set about tackling the issues. This is likely to be a central skill in a society in which new information will need to be sifted, reviewed and synthesised, when new situations are encountered and new kinds of diagnosis are called for.*
>
> *The second characteristic which children can develop at school is a love of and commitment to learning. This will predispose them to look to learning as a normal part of their lives, whatever they are doing: in their personal development, in their families, in work, in the community and as they develop as citizens.* [lxiv]

The idea that a purpose of education is to help young people learn how to learn is provisionally rejected on the grounds that learning, like critical thinking, is necessarily connected with content. Richard Pring has rightly reminded us that:

> *… 'learning' has an object. One learns something. And teachers' professional expertise lies in their being able to get people to learn particular kinds of skill or knowledge or understanding. Teaching them how to learn* **as such** *is a contemporary nonsense which ignores the obvious truth that the psychology of learning must respect the logical structure of that which is to be learned. Learning mathematics, because of the structure and key ideas of that particular discipline, is different from the learning of history or literary appreciation. And indeed the same might be said of moral learning.*[lxv]

The idea that schooling should foster a love of and commitment to learning should be embedded in the purposes of schooling in Queensland, as an essential element of preparation for life. And schools should be held accountable for achieving this outcome

Clearly, positive experiences of learning at school enhance young people's motivation to learn throughout life. However, lifelong learning in school (as distinct

from adult education) is a relatively under-developed idea, and more analysis is needed to turn the principle into robust practice.

A major survey of attitudes to learning conducted in Britain in 1998 suggested three starting points. Barriers to learning for young people included poor teaching (77%), feeling unhappy (74%) and teachers who did not understand how children learn.[lxvi] Perhaps the knowledge age requires us to achieve a better balance between the current emphasis on teaching, pursued by philosophers and curriculum specialists, and the earlier though now neglected emphasis on learning, influenced by cognitive psychologists. Such a shift may help schools make better use of new technologies to develop a disposition towards lifelong learning.

Conclusion

This paper has travelled extensively through time and place in an attempt to inform and encourage debate about the purposes of schooling in Queensland for the next decade. In the end, it will be up to the citizens of Queensland to consider the ideas here so that they may choose purposes appropriate for young people in Queensland over the next decade.

In making that choice, citizens should reflect on John Ralston Saul's idea that the one thing every individual has in common is that they belong to society. It is on this essential commonality that we will need to build educational purposes for the future.

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