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Lifelong Learning and Schools

Presented by

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Introduction
Learning has high currency at the moment’ and is seen as ‘the key to our future in a democratic society and knowledge-based economy’ (Renshaw, 2002, p1). To a degree this is not surprising because of the emphasis being placed on lifelong learning at the international and national levels. Lifelong learning, defined as having “a social, a political, an economic, a health...even a spiritual phenomenon” (Longworth, 1999) has been described within four pillars of learning - learning to know, learning to do, learning to live together and learning to be (UNESCO, 1998) - and aims for personal fulfilment, social inclusion and economic advancement for all (UNESCO, 1998). These foci are the bases for creating a world vision for society through different means, for example, by the formation of learning communities within cities, estates, towns and regions (Longworth, 1996). As schools are "reenergising", "reinvigorating" and "remarketing" their structures and processes for learning provision, the opportunity exists for a greater lifelong learning foci within schools’ articulation of education and practice.

Continuous learning and consolidation is at the heart of education within learning communities (Senge, 1998; Longworth, 1998; Aspin and Chapman, 1998; Hough and Paine, 1997; Sergiovanni, 1996; Johnson, 1996). Continuous learning applicable to life, should be is at the heart of school philosophy statements and embedded in all school activities. At a time when lifelong learning is a debatable issue, it is important for schools to articulate their claim and influential position for learning provision.

Schools as Learning Communities
UNESCO (1998) stresses the importance of allowing people to develop skills, attitudes and values that enable them to work together to bring about change and take control of their lives. In schools this can be achieved by retaining the balance between the experiential and participatory, thus helping students to grow as persons and ultimately to continually make a contribution to society (Hicks, 1999). This necessitates the development of “the learning habit” (Binney and Williams, 1997:153), which can be achieved by raising the quality and realism of learning in all aspects of an activity. ‘Real’ lifelong learning in schools involves “much thinking and doing, and involves working on real life priorities which are at the cutting edge of education” (Binney and Williams, 1997: 139). Lifelong learning necessitates exploration, discovery and action (Binney and Williams (1997:141). Longworth (1998) argues that motivation through creative, rewarding and fun activities (Longworth, 1998:13) leads to enjoyment and celebration of learning and potentially encourages further ownership of learning in a student’s life.

In promoting lifelong learning attention must be given to value systems for the individual, for the organisation and for society:
• Individual values are stressed in personal growth and development and investment in the future of the learner;
• Organisational values are those that focus on creating and sustaining learning communities and empowering the learners; and
• Societal values highlight learning as an investment for social harmony and cohesion (Longworth, 1998) and for career opportunity.

Teachers and Lifelong Learning
The development of the lifelong learning approach in schools is dependent to a great extent on the leadership exercised by teachers. Their leadership must ensure that lifelong learning is achieved by:
• the provision of authentic activities that reflect learning; and by
• the progressive transference of the responsibility of learning to the students (Merideth, 2000).

These two outcomes are dependent on:
• the vision that teachers have for lifelong learning;
• their ability to develop their leadership from a lifelong learning perspective; and
• their ability to be ‘lead learners’ themselves, who ‘own’ their learning, and subsequently reflect on what they do and how they do it for the benefit of students.

The challenge for teachers as leaders is to do what they say they will do – prepare the students for life (Cooper and Sawak, 1997).

Philosophy Statements and Lifelong Learning

Philosophy and Reality
The concept of lifelong learning, articulated specifically or in intent in philosophy statements and/or strategic plans for schools, must be more than rhetoric – ‘beyond rhetoric to effective educational practice’ (Cornford, 1999:1). Underpinning the expectations of strategic plans are the fundamental assumptions of inspiration and hope for both students and teachers:
• For students the inspiration and hope is activated by engagement in meaningful learning; learning that is connected to their real life experiences and which contributes to their formation in the present and the future; and
• For teachers their adulation might be tailored by exercising various roles in the education process of students.

For both students and teachers, the concept of lifelong learning implies that they are ‘lead learners’, owning the possibilities, processes and actions for learning and increasing educational competencies; and in addition, in the case of teachers, further developing their professionalism.

Influencing lead learners will be a number of current trends that affect the work of schools in the early twenty-first century, for example:
• Relationships and expectations formulated by the global community;
• Positional play between schools and the broader community;
• Emphasis on learning communities;
• The need for equity caused by lack of access to many forms of learning by some students;
• Technological expansion;
• Demands for improved standards and assessments; and
• Resource sharing of staff and equipment across educational sites.

In helping schools gauge their effectiveness, characteristics of a lifelong learning school have been articulated and are invaluable aids for strategic planning for schools in the future. A school committed to lifelong learning:
• looks outward to the world, promoting a sense of tolerance, justice and understanding of different races, creeds and cultures in all students;
• stimulates home-school cooperation and involves the family in the life and work of the school;
• broadens the vision of the staff and students through a wide range of cultural experiences and extracurricular activities;
• celebrates learning frequently as a desirable, permanent and enjoyable habit for all;
• involves students and staff in the maintenance of a culture of quality and respect for high standards in everything it does, and in continuous improvement standards for staff;
• develops a curriculum based on the enhancement of personal skills and values to improve the knowledge and understanding, and to enable students to manage change through their lives;
• has a written organisational strategy, available to all, for developing the full potential of each student and member of staff;
• increases the resources available to the school by harnessing the skills, talents and knowledge of administrators, parents, business leaders and other members of the community, to create new learning opportunities and implement school strategies;
• makes links with the world of work which enrich students' knowledge and experiences and facilitate a 'learning' approach to adult life;
• uses modern information and communication technologies widely across all disciplines, including the exploration of collaborative learning opportunities and networks; and
• expands lifelong learning in all students and staff by involving them in the development of personal plans, guides and mentors
• (Bryce, Frigo, McKenzie and Withers, 2000:4).

Translating ideals and approaches of lifelong learning from a school philosophy statement and strategic plan to the school community, and importantly to the classroom, requires commitment on the part of the whole school community. Promoting lifelong learning is dependent on:

• the degree to which teachers in schools are lifelong learners themselves or have a lifelong orientation... as a basis for what it means to be a teacher; and because
• students have preconceived expectations of learning which are largely gained from their families (Bryce, Frigo, McKenzie and Withers, 2000:30).
Lifelong Learning and Schools - Seven Perspectives
This section particularly considers lifelong learning from seven perspectives as perceived by teachers: identity, learning and teaching, staff development, partnerships, leadership and management, technology and resourcing. This is a framework for strategic planning as used in the Catholic Diocese of Ballarat. The theoretical base, provided in relation to each aspect of the strategic planning format, highlights practical issues relating to teacher competence for advancing and evaluating lifelong learning in schools.

Identity
The lifelong learning approach in relation to the building of identity concentrates on the development of persons, culture and community within individual regional communities. The emphasis on person seeks to explore the development of individual competencies of students that lead to an understanding of their personal wellbeing and social inclusion. These are essential in their search for individual identity, meaning and significance. The emphasis on culture aims to provide indicators of knowledge, beliefs and norms from which significance is derived. A framework for culture building is important for the establishment of learning communities based on lifelong learning.

Identity is crucial to social and lifelong learning for three reasons:

- Students’ identities combine experience and competence into a way of knowing. They are the key to deciding what matters, with whom one identifies, and with whom one must share what is understood;
- Learning from interactions with other practices is a matter of opening up identities to other ways of being in the world; and
- Identities are not static; they are ‘living vessels’ (Wenger, 2001) which develop and become realised as an experience of the world.

A strong identity within schools can be described in terms of a three crucial qualities:

- Connectedness. An identity is a lived experience of belonging. A strong identity involved deep connections with others through shared histories and experiences, reciprocity, and mutual commitments.
- Expansion. A strong identity will not be exclusively locally defined. It will involve multi-membership and cross multiple boundaries. It will seek a wide range of experiences and be open to new possibilities. It will identify with broad communities that lie beyond direct participation in schools.
- Effectiveness. A strong identity is socially empowering; it is a vehicle for students’ participation in the social world (Wenger, 2001).

Identity in relation to the promotion of lifelong long learning in schools can be explored in relation to communities that are collegial, caring, inclusive and inquiring (Sergiovanni, 2000:59-60). Schools, for example those promoting a caring environment, might focus on lifelong learning built around themes of uniqueness and specialness for the development of identity and have definite mission foci and cultures for community service; and be committed to education in its broadest sense.
Learning and Teaching

Professional learning today must be a means of learning which moves teachers from 'a systemsworld’ approach to “a lifeworld” of learning (Sergiovanni, 2001). Ideally it is 'a process of discovery’, with ‘an appropriation to oneself’ of ‘what is new’ and ‘makes one’s identity manifest to oneself and others’ (Strain, 2000). Hence it is a celebration of personal growth and an expression of a claimed and contestable relationship with ‘what is’ and ‘what is of worth’ (Strain, 2000). In the context of schools ‘what is of worth’ should be manifested in learning through the servant rather than mechanistic approach (Spears, 1999). A challenge of professional learning is advancement and change. This requires teachers to reflect on the implications of innovations and reform (Ordonez, 1999.)

Sound judgments by teachers must contribute to the identification of students' needs regarding learning opportunities and structures and processes to be employed; also to the need for further supervision for desired outcomes which are influenced by continuous effort and consolidation; together with the building of students' self-esteem. Also, teachers giving consideration to the design of work, to the multiple intelligences with students in mind, can influence both learning and teaching practice. Schooling is influenced when learning and teaching is a conscious explicit process, and an organised effort with a clear notion of intended outcomes (National Board of Employment, Education and Training, 1996:13).

School-based curriculum development (Marsh & Willis, 1999; Prideaux, 1993) provides an appropriate context for school communities to adapt curriculum programs. In adhering to such plans schools must aim for empowerment {sic} of individuals, quality {sic} and school improvement (Hopkins, 1997:6).

Staff Development

Lifelong learning is dependent on the success of opportunities available to staff which contribute to their personal and professional development.

"Participation in high quality teacher development is a key element in improving student outcomes” (Department of Education, Training and Youth Affairs, 2000:16) – “our success as a society … depends on quality teaching...” “the starting point is teacher development” (Ramsay, 2000:4). Teachers need both personal and professional development appropriate to their own needs and consistent with the demands of educational advancement in learning for students. For example, teachers need time to develop their stewardship, service and professional virtues that contribute to and provide the substance for mission consistent with philosophies and strategic plans of schools. Teachers need time to discover how students learn and how they teach for effective lifelong learning. They need time to enhance the kind of teaching they do and to be skilled in different and varied classroom management approaches. Staff development for lifelong learning needs to be consistent with the many roles that teachers will play. For example in the computing area the roles of learning diagnostician, information gatherer for software programs, courseware writer and curriculum designer are important; or more generally, evaluator of learning performances, evaluator of social skills, and facilitator of small and large group learning (Ballentine, 1989). However, when giving consideration to individual and group
professional learning for lifelong learning there is need to allow for three
categories of purposeful learning activities:

- formal learning
- non-formal learning and
- informal learning (Commission of European Communities, 2000).

**Partnerships**

In promoting lifelong learning among members of their school communities
teachers can establish reciprocal partnerships with a variety of groups and
institutions. Of key importance is the need for teachers to forge strong
partnerships with parents (Brady, 1999; Brady & Kennedy, 2001; Marsh, 2000;
McGilp, 2001; Robinson, 1997). Collaborative cultures advocated by a number
of educators (Brady, 1999; Brady & Kennedy, 1999; Fullan, 1991, 1993; Fullan &
Hargreaves (1992); Marsh, 1997; Smyth, 1991; Williamson & Cowley, 1995) are
considered to be essential for school communities in promoting principles and
practices of lifelong learning through partnerships.

The formulation of networks is another way in which partnerships can be fostered
and collaborative cultures engendered within communities. In their writings
Malcolm (1996) promote philosophies of networking among various types of
communities, including school communities.

Leadership styles that help promote lifelong learning and develop partnerships
are those that are based on a service philosophy, invitational approaches and
collaborative agreements. Teachers, as leaders, must be sensitive to community
expertise and challenges and work towards synergetic partnerships which will
give children a sound grounding in lifelong learning. Isolated experiences of
learning can be ‘jigsawed’ into integrated, lifelong learning through partnerships.
One of the challenges for school leaders today is to keep emphasising the value of
lifelong learning experiences for children rather than early specialisation with the
notion of employability to the fore.

**Leadership and Management**

Essentially there has been a shift in leadership proclamation from the hierarchical
approach of leader-follower, with leadership invested in one person, to the service
approach, where leadership is invested in many people.

Leadership for lifelong learning ensures management and administrative
structures and processes support learning. It is imperative that leadership and
existing practices of management and administration in schools work towards
rather than against, the development of a lifelong approach to learning for all
(Chapman and Aspin, 1997). Lifelong learning, through leading and managing,
pays attention to the ‘lifeworld’ of the school, where culture and meaning for all
are important; in contrast to the ‘systemsworld’, a world of instrumentalities and
management systems (Sergiovanni, 2000:4).

Leadership and management must monitor the claimed and contestable
relationship with ‘what is’ and ‘what is of worth’ (Strain, 2000).
Information Technology
In the information economy, quality education and training are fundamental to the wellbeing of individuals, communities and nations (MCEETYA, 2000:1).

Much has been written about the need for integrating information and communication technology into pedagogy so that ultimately students have the knowledge and skills essential for the transition from school to work (Ramsay, 2000). Assisting this is the creation of learning environments that are 'broad in scope and deep in concept development' through information and communication technology (Ramsay, 2000).

Information literacy in relation to schools requires students to be technologically literate so that they can use a number of information sources” (Bryce, Frigo, McKenzie, Withers, 2000:11). It can be argued that “information technology adds to self-knowledge, task knowledge, content knowledge and context knowledge” (Bryce, Frigo, McKenzie, Withers, 2000:29).

Resourcing
Lifelong learning in schools is dependent on a necessary level of resourcing. Resourcing, both from the human and material dimensions, is crucial for educational stability and innovation. Teachers, as facilitators of learning, need to be trained and resourced to perform with confidence and competence. This means being controllers of, rather than being controlled by resources, or a lack thereof. While widespread use of computer-linked equipment is predicted to be a feature of schools in twenty-first century, and certain schools are already using computers in more sophisticated ways than perhaps even twelve months ago, equitable access to computers is only one aspect of resourcing to be addressed. Others include:

• the sharing of resources; and
• politicking for resource provision at local, state and national levels.

Many diverse resources are available to school communities. “Creative teachers will access a wide range to accommodate the diverse range of interests and learning styles of their respective students” (Brady and Kennedy, 1999:190). However, we need to remember that a key resource for enhancing the development of lifelong learning within school communities is the human resource - “parents, friends, neighbours, doctors, lawyers, councillors, scout and guide leaders, political and religious leaders, journalists, television presenters, comedians and actors Longworth and Davies (1996:141):

Ways of Promoting Lifelong Learning: Teachers’ Views

Introduction
This section concentrates on the emphases that teachers see as important for lifelong learning in schools according to the headings used in the previous section - identity, learning and teaching, staff development, partnerships, leadership and management, technology and resourcing. Comments by teachers support their perceptions that schools are advancing lifelong learning. The suggestions and comments were derived from responses gained in the “Lifelong Learning and
Schools’ Project conducted in 2001-2002, particularly in primary and secondary schools administered by the Catholic Diocese of Sale.

Identity

- Teachers emphasise the following for the development of identity:
  - Involvement in reflection on the mission and vision of a school;
  - The values of identity being the overarching concern of all teachers;
  - Values underpin all curriculum;
  - Celebration of the development of teachers, students and the school community;
  - Pastoral care and support for students; and
  - Relationships with the wider community

The following comments from teachers capture some of these ideas:

(We) promote personal identity of each child through nurturing and pastoral care parallel to curriculum

(We encourage students to identify and act where appropriate, for example, involvement in charity fundraisers and work to become familiar with a social justice problem and to be able to emphasise and act (even if action is informing others)

The ‘caring and sharing’ ethos is included in all the schools advertising and permeates throughout the curriculum. There is interaction throughout the community by projects… helping in Primary schools, … and raising money for charities is of high priority

Learning and Teaching

The responses from teachers indicate that to promote lifelong learning in teaching and learning they:

- Regularly participate in professional development programs;
- Implement special programs, including literacy and electives programs;
- Are becoming skilled at recognising and meeting students’ diverse educational needs.
- Review curriculum programs and the introduction of new curriculum programs;
- Provide staff support structures;
- Work on team planning and team work;
- Adapt teaching and learning styles to meet students' specific needs;
- Provide adequate resources and facilities;
- Develop positive classroom learning environments; and
- Use technology in implementing curriculum programs.

The following comments were made by teachers:

(I) negotiate curriculum with students {and} develop valuable learning situations by evaluating student performance and enjoyment.
The school is open to new ideas and programs that assist teachers in the classroom to provide quality learning and teaching. There are also several support programs for both staff and students.

(I) use a range of learning and teaching techniques and styles: Multiple Intelligences, discussion of written work, prayer and liturgy, CD Roms, computer Internet library for resources.

Staff Development
The responses from the teachers emphasised the following in relation to staff development for lifelong learning:

- Involvement of staff in individual professional development;
- Staff attend in-services, or are part of school/team staff development activities;
- Spiritual development is seen as important to staff development;
- Team/staff support and pastoral care are identified aspects of staff development with visiting speakers;
- Social activities;
- Further study; and
- Staff meetings.

The following comments were identified as capturing the majority of responses:

Staff members are encouraged to partake of professional reading, engage in discussions and develop plans together to develop as professionals on individual and whole school to promote spiritual growth; staff pray and celebrate together.

Time release; ‘guest speakers’; encourage further studies by giving release time to enable teachers to have this opportunity.

Offer assistance, ideas, etc to younger members of staff in classroom practices and procedures. Encourage teamwork in their work in class. Show interest in peers.

Professional learning is well funded, encouraged and prioritised. Post graduate study is encouraged and supported.

Partnerships
The responses from both primary and secondary teachers strongly indicate the importance of the following for lifelong learning in schools:

- Networking of staff and students among schools;
- Schools regularly engage in community involvement ventures;
- Parent involvement in varying capacities in schools, for example, in reading programs, attendance at parent evenings and membership within organisations such as the Parents and Friends;
• School communities engaging in social activities, work experience programs (secondary schools), staff development programs (secondary schools) and school publicity ventures.

The following comments have been identified as capturing the essence of the responses:

{We have} networks based on budget associations, Internet links, geographical area meetings, staff conferences.

{We are} building partnerships with sister schools to create a warm community. Also to help moving from primary to secondary school.

Many of our classes and extra curricular activities are focused towards our community. We welcome any community involvement in the school. We have participated in at least 10 community activities.

Leadership and Management
The areas emphasised by teachers in relation to leadership and management for lifelong learning in schools were:

• Staff involvement in leadership through planning and consultative meetings;
• Staff encouragement to take on leadership roles;
• Role models and mentoring;
• Staff involvement in further education and training in the area of leadership; and
• Student leadership;

These points were illustrated by some teachers’ comments:

We have a clear administrative structure plus a consultative committee.

Ample opportunities are given for staff to participate in leadership courses.

(There is) encouragement of younger staff to apply for leadership positions mentor system.

There is a strong emphasis on fostering student leadership in a range of ways.

Information Technology
The main emphases for lifelong learning expressed by teachers were:

• The importance of computer facilities and resources;
• The use of IT across the curriculum;
• Involvement of staff in professional development;
• The major role played by the library;
• The use of internet/school/CEO websites;
• The benefits of regular upgrades made in technology; and
• The specialist help provided in IT.
The following comments highlight the emphases placed on IT:

We have computers in classroom, internet connection, quality software, regular in-servicing of staff.

The whole school is networked; computers in every classroom. Whole staff had PD at Navigator school. Weekly bulletin is emailed to staff. Reports for parents are computerised. One of our POL's is technology.

We use of computer programs to support teaching. We encourage the exploration and use of new technologies through learning about them.

Resourcing

The comments from staff suggested the following were important practices in the use of resources for lifelong learning:

- The sharing of resources between schools;
- The quality of the library;
- The successful budgeting for resource allocation; and
- Staff involvement in resource allocation.

Comments supporting the above are:

Through the budgeting allocations our department has been able to build its resources to a level adequate for the number of students and activities undertaken

(We have) a very supportive library staff. (We are) developing a culture of sharing resources among staff

We arrange room swaps to be able to use technology. (We) read science, maths and LOTE journals for book and activity resources

Some Challenges for Teachers Promoting Lifelong Learning

While the challenges for teachers are many today a basic means of advancing lifelong learning might be for teachers to revisit the following:

- Learning to paint;
- Learning to use their skills; and
- Learning to share their wisdom (Lindsay, 2002)

thus developing as teachers, using talents and gifts to the full and being prepared to share knowledge and skills gained. These facets entail progression and advancement. For such advancement it is imperative that each teacher is in tune with:

- Knowing the ‘me’;
- Appreciating the ‘me’;
- Sharing the ‘me’; and
- Professionalising the ‘me’ (Merideth, 2000).
Teachers then might further extend their capacity to move from a “systems world” to a “lifeworld” in schools for the promotion of learning (Sergiovanni, 2000). Such journeying can result from critically reviewing and trialling different models for the empowerment of teachers, for example, the REACH Model (Merideth, 2000:3) which comprises:

- Risk taking;
- Effectiveness;
- Autonomy;
- Collegiality; and
- Honor

Such action can potentially assist teachers to engage their students and themselves in lifelong learning. If teachers are further encouraged in their professional learning and leadership, would their responses in the seven areas of how schools promote lifelong learning - through identity, learning and teaching, staff development, partnerships, leadership and management, information technology and resourcing - be significantly different? Are schools really lifelong learning centres for all who participate in them - students, teachers, parents, visitors, policymakers...? Is there need to promote schools differently through the lifelong learning agenda? Through this means can schools reenergise, reinvigorate and remarket for the benefit of learners?

Conclusion
In reading the experiences of teachers in promoting lifelong learning one can gain an understanding of both the successes and the challenges that they face. The responses give rise to a question for teachers in all schools, How do they achieve lifelong learning in the identified areas? The responses from teachers show their willingness to be engaged in research and dialogue for the advancement of lifelong learning. However, the responses also set challenges, Is there need to be more adventurous? Is teachers’ creativity an answer? And because of the lifelong learning agenda, Is there need to market schools differently today?

Advance lifelong learning in schools:
Allow yourself the chance.
Don’t judge or compare.
Open your mind to the possibilities of your creativity.
See how children paint with abandon.
Look at the world around you with innocence.
See the colors.
Make a start...
   (Lindsay, 2002)

Be a lead learner and advocate for lifelong learning!
References


