



## Public submission made to the Review to Achieve Educational Excellence in Australian Schools

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### Summary

- Schools should teach global competency (OECD, 2016) in an increasingly heterogeneous population.
- Schools need not be organized in classes and subjects or issue grades.
- A mechanism for the recognition of informal and non-formal education is essential. Vocational education has RPL; what do we have elsewhere?
- National and international benchmarks and certificates are available for the measurement and recognition of achievement. Some e.g. are IB, Cambridge.
- Education is trending to users-pay. How will we respond to this to give equity?
- Fewer, more highly skilled teachers will be supplemented by modern technology and non-teacher adults highly skilled in required areas.
- The ILE 7+3 learning principles or Levin's nine essential practices should form the basis of pedagogy.
- Schools and students should have community partnerships which may be global in nature.
- Bureaucracy should reduce.

### Main submission

Future educational excellence is bound by its past. An existing human-organised system will likely change by evolution rather than by revolution. (Beare, 2001: p85) Hedley Beare is the only person in Australia to have set up two education systems: the Northern Territory and the ACT. In 1977 the then Chief Education Officer for the ACT Schools Authority published a booklet of 11 propositions for the operation of an educational organisation. Beare's more recent text, *Creating the Future School*, directly focusses on the future of education.

Where we have come from. Did we get there?

Material from "The Beare Eleven" (Beare, 1977) and "Creating the Future School" (Beare, 2001) follows.

The organisation should have a "service orientation" which manifests itself in the following working code:

1. Service is not at a distance - it means personal involvement with people.
2. No person or problem is beyond our concern or attention. In fact, we are obligated to seek out the 'outcasts'.
3. We can never really give up on a person.
4. Our own interests or personal feelings are not of any importance as we serve. We may not personally like the person.
5. We must individually assume that we are responsible and thus try our best to make a difference.

Beare suggested that the organisation should minimise the ill-effects of bureaucracy by maintaining a low bureaucratic profile. Given that education is part of the Public Service some of Beare's suggestions may not be possible.

- We should ask for just enough regulations to get by, and not one more.
- Policies, and policy rulings, should be few and general. The more particular they become, the less flexibility they allow to the creative operator.
- The fewer promotional rungs there are, the more one delimits the rat-race for promotion. One's enjoyment of one's work then depends upon variety, challenge, interchange rather than the success of scrabbling up the promotional tree.
- We should look for opportunities to allow officers to practise job enlargement. We should encourage them to work beyond their duty statements, to participate in planning teams and task forces. In short, we should not allow people to be confined to boxes.
- We need to develop an organisational structure in which people accept responsibility and are willing to act in that way.

Beare wrote that the organisation should be dynamic. He believed that this is hindered by traditional bureaucracy: The key decision makers acquire a filtered view of reality by getting to know only what other people feed up to him (sic). How does one solve that problem? I believe therefore that most dynamic systems require someone, or a group of people, to roam the gaps in the organisation, to act as stimulators, sponsors of interaction, sharers and carriers of ideas and information, in short to be facilitators and catalysts.

Participation is important to the operation of an educational organisation:

Firstly, if the people involved in implementing the decision involved in arriving at the decision then there is a greater chance of successful implementation. And education is a labour-intensive industry and involves many people besides teachers, educators and learners. Secondly, there are some ideas which we will not have access to unless we include some people. Teachers must be included because, if we are dispensing a professional service, teachers are the ones who can advise how the decisions will affect their students. Thirdly, it has been well documented that every child has a parent standing in the background as a powerful educative influence. In fact, some studies would suggest the parent impact on a student's achievement is more powerful than that of the schools. So, if we are going to ensure adequate learning in schools, parents must be regarded as partners in the process. But it is not only parents who influence the education of the young, for the community's impact is also profound.

Andrew Martin, a University of Sydney academic, has published a review of literature which supports parent involvement as positively affecting student outcomes (Martin, A.J., 2013). An OECD 2012 report on Equity in Education (OECD, 2012) contained as one recommendation the prioritisation of linking parents and schools (OECD, 2012, p142) Professor John Hattie in his Visible Learning series of books makes the point that teachers are the biggest source of variation in student achievement which is within the control of the school (for example p25, Hattie, J., 2012). Perhaps increased parent involvement could leverage this teacher effect in a positive way. Martin, an educational psychologist sees increased involvement of fathers, extra efforts made with low SES families and professional learning for teachers as especially important for collaborative success.

Beare also made predictions for the future of organisational forms. These he borrows from the American organisational expert Warren Bennis (Bennis, W. 1973).

Where is Australia in this model? How much is skill eg in excellent classroom teachers valued above persons in higher status positions?

"People will be differentiated not vertically according to rank and status, but flexibly and functionally according to skill and professional training." Bennis here emphasises the non-hierarchical approach; one that values skill, not status. Then Bennis summarises the new form of organisation.

Firstly, it is "adaptive". People ought not to be worried about being pulled off one job and put on another.

Secondly, it is "problem solving"; it focuses not on carrying out tasks, but on identifying problems and getting them solved.

It consists of "temporary systems of diverse specialists"; to solve some problems, the organisation will need to select people from here and there so that collectively they have among them the range of skills needed to solve the problem.

Those temporary systems will be linked together by a roughly drawn structure.

If the executive is to be a task evaluation specialist, one of his (sic) jobs will be to size up the problem, say what he needs to solve it, assign the people he needs to solve it, and when they come up with a solution he must be able to evaluate whether the suggested solution is satisfactory.

John Hattie (Hattie, 2012: p182) has as one mind frame for teachers that they are evaluators of student learning and achievement. Are 'temporary systems of diverse specialists' operating at the school level? Perhaps with students of complex needs. Beare also writes in support of school based action and initiative, but has reservations: Frankly, I have some reservations about a school-based approach. Why? My reason is that I think the school as we know it is about to undergo a massive remodelling throughout the world. I am not confident that the conventional school can survive into the 21st century. Some of the developmental work going on in South-East Asia concerning non-formal education should make us pause. For poorer nations have decided that the traditional school is wastefully expensive and that it is possible to design a non-formal education (NFE) program that leads a student from grade 1 through to adult education without his ever having to go inside a school. The NFE approach is one of the most promising developments in education, yet it is the newer (and poorer) nations who have discovered this new form, and are showing that they can make it work. I am therefore worried lest the school-based approach simply reaffirms a model which is about to be reformed, if for no other reason than that of finance!

One publication which supports some of Beare's reservations is the OECD report by Werquin. (Werquin, 2010) This publication surveys policies and practices in 16 OECD countries about the means to recognise non-formal and informal learning. It does not advocate for a diminished school role but indicates that it is time for recognising learning wherever it occurs.

The executive summary of the report notes:

Recognition of non-formal and informal learning outcomes is high on policy agendas.

Recognition gives non-formal and informal learning outcomes value for further formal Learning.

Recognition gives non-formal and informal learning outcomes value in the labour market.

Recognition can involve several steps of increasing formalisation.

Recognition delivers a range of benefits.

Recognition can also help to improve equity.

Recognition processes are often marginal, small-scale and not yet sustainable.

Better communication about recognition is needed.

Recognition processes could also be better integrated into lifelong learning policies.

Recognition procedures and processes could be improved.

Processes could be reshaped to give greater validity to qualifications obtained through recognition.

Recognition has benefits but also has costs.

The challenge for policy makers is to find the right balance.

Could this be a national focus?

One point made by Beare is unlikely to change if excellence is to be achieved:

The students' needs are paramount. Over almost everything we do, we must ask ourselves, "How will this affect kids?" The schools system should be one dedicated to the love of children.

The educator, and especially the educational administrator, must keep in mind all the time the consideration, "What will be the educational outcomes of our action?"

Beare also writes in favour of innovation:

And there are so many things in education which are needing change. Secondary education, non-formal education, education beyond school, getting the school and the community together, the teacher role, better staff usage, the teacher becoming catalyst rather than instructor, teacher attitudes focussing on professionalism, the school year, the use of the school plant, the holistic curriculum, parent and home co-opted into the education process. New instructional programmes as the result of technology, education networks, education for world citizenship - the list goes on.

Where is a system that will pioneer new territory in education? At a time when schools are under violent attack around the globe, the world looks for a visionary system that will fulfil rather than frustrate our hopes for our children. Is ours that system? Shouldn't it be?

The OECD (Australia is a member) has an abiding interest in innovation and has produced a series of reports which describe innovative learning. (referenced in OECD, 2015).

The essence of the Innovative Learning Environments (ILE) report may be summarized in 7 learning principles and 3 innovation dimensions below:

The seven learning principles.

The 7 of the 7+3 are the seven essential design principles identified in The Nature of Learning report (Dumont, Istance and Benavides, 2010). These principles originally referred to the design of individual learning environments so as to optimise learning. But they equally serve as principles to guide wider strategies, reforms and system

change. In order to be most effective, schools and other learning environments should attend to all of the following design principles:

Learning Principle One: Make learning central, encourage engagement, and be where learners come to understand themselves as learners.

Learning Principle Two: Ensure that learning is social and often collaborative.

Learning Principle Three: Be highly attuned to learners' motivations and the importance of emotions.

Learning Principle Four: Be acutely sensitive to individual differences including in prior knowledge.

Learning Principle Five: Be demanding for each learner but without excessive overload.

Learning Principle Six: Use assessments consistent with these aims, with strong emphasis on formative feedback.

Learning Principle Seven: Promote horizontal connectedness across learning activities and subjects, in- and out-of-school

The three innovation dimensions

The learning principles resemble the nine essential practices espoused by Ben Levin and outlined by Hattie (Hattie, 2012) in his book *Visible Learning for Teachers*. In a follow-up ILE report (OECD, 2013) the learning principles were maintained as fundamental to all activities and organisation but included three dimensions to optimise the conditions for putting the principles into practice:

- i. Innovate the pedagogical core. This is about ensuring that the core aims, practices and dynamics are innovated to match the ambition of the learning principles. It is about innovating both the core elements (learners, educators, content and learning resources) and the dynamics that connect those elements (pedagogy and formative evaluation, use of time, and the organisation of educators and learners).
- ii. Become “formative organisations” with strong learning leadership. Learning environments and systems do not just change by themselves but need strong design with vision and strategies. To be firmly focused on learning such leadership needs to be constantly informed by self-review and evidence on learning achieved.
- iii. Open up to partnerships. This recognises that isolation within a world of complex learning systems is to seriously limit potential. A powerful learning environment and learning system will constantly be creating synergies and finding new ways to enhance professional, social and cultural capital with others. They will do this with families and

communities, higher education, cultural institutions, businesses, and especially other schools and learning environments.

The ideas expressed are consistent with Beare's views especially as modified in his 2001 publication *Creating the Future School*. Although the OECD publication was produced many years later.

Beare's final proposition was about the type of educators we need for the future:

What education needs, I think, are eschatological educators, educators who know the future they want to bring in and who are determined that they are going to get there.

Where are we going to? Can we get there?

Beare wrote further about the future in his 2001 book, *Creating the future school* (Beare, H. ,2001). It discusses in detail curriculum, teachers and schools of the future. An essay derived from the book (ibid, pp11-17) is available in various internet forms. It presents a view the future of education and the world. The accuracy of the predictions about the world lends credibility to the education predictions.

Summary of the Beare et al literature

Some key points to extract from the writings quoted:

- Schools should teach global competency (OECD, 2016) in an increasingly heterogeneous population.
- Schools need not be organized in classes and subjects or issue grades.
- A mechanism for the recognition of informal and non-formal education is essential. Vocational education has RPL; what do we have elsewhere?
- National and international benchmarks and certificates are available for the measurement and recognition of achievement. Some e.g. are IB, Cambridge.
- Education is trending to users-pay. How will we respond to this to give equity?
- Fewer, more highly skilled teachers will be supplemented by modern technology and non-teacher adults highly skilled in required areas.
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What kind of learner should we be trying to develop?

The Center for Curriculum Redesign (CCR) considers the question: “What should students learn for the twenty-first century?”. The focus of this group is the characteristics of learners of the future who will meet the requirements of a single global economy (Fadel et al, 2015). The outcome is summarised in the CCR 4 dimensional framework which summarised briefly– Knowledge, Skills (creativity, critical thinking, communication, collaboration, ), Character (mindfulness, curiosity, courage, resilience, ethics, leadership) Meta-Learning (metacognition, growth mindset)

It is notable that this work of the many organisations who contribute to CCR is congruent with Beare’s work. Where to now?

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