



**AEU Response to the  
Review of Teaching and Teacher  
Education  
Discussion Paper:**

**Young People, Schools and Innovation:  
Towards an Action Plan for the School  
Sector**

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# 1 Introduction

1.1 The AEU is the union representing over 155 000 education workers in public education. As such, its membership includes teachers and teacher assistants in pre-schools, schools and TAFE.

1.2 The AEU recognises that the coming decades will see considerable change in the nature of society and work and that this will necessitate changes in schools, the curriculum, and pedagogy.

1.3 At the same time, however, the AEU makes the following observations regarding the nature of the debate about the future and predicted changes in schools:

- many of those advocating change speak with a sense of inevitability and pre-determinism without any reference to the capacity for individuals and society to have input into how the future might look;
- in general, they portray and seek to hurry towards a work environment which is pro-employer and in which workers have no collective rights or capacity, without any analysis of alternative;
- there is little or no discussion of the social implications of what might happen and how we can ensure that there are not victims as well as beneficiaries of progress;
- whilst bioinformatics, biotechnology, genomics etc. may well be set to become more important, it does not mean that we should immediately let go of, for instance, manufacturing industry. The new science based industries, whilst potentially vital to the Australian economy, will not, in the medium term, at least, provide employment for all those leaving school and this must remain a consideration. This is very important because, for instance, a decline in the number of students taking VET courses in manufacturing subjects is likely to leave a shortfall in this area and could mean that its decline becomes inevitable because of skills shortages rather than lack of economic opportunities;
- the likely changes are frequently exaggerated, with adapting to the future portrayed as needing a seismic shift and complete revolution in practice. In reality, much of what is now being identified as necessary teaching for the future has been advocated by many progressive educationists for a long time, and regularly practiced in many classrooms. This is discussed further below at 3. 4;
- It also needs to be acknowledged that creating the innovative workforce which is the objective of the inquiry will not simultaneously achieve the compliant workforce which seems to be an unstated objective of much of, particularly, employer views. An innovative workforce is likely to contain independent thinkers and those who are prepared to challenge the status quo, not only in those areas of productive gain that employers would like. It is important to schools that this is recognised. There are many pressures on schools to be conservative, to create a highly disciplined and regulated environment in which all students behave the same way. Much of the pressure for basic skills testing, examination results, competency based learning and even employability skills themselves implies a degree of uniformity in students which in many ways runs counter to the creation of innovative students. There needs to be much more discussion about the relationship between core and basic skills and the creation of an environment which encourages innovation if schools are not to be asked to pursue incompatible objectives. Examples of innovative schools that have collapsed because of conservative community attitudes are not uncommon.

- 1.4 The AEU then engages in the “futures debate” from a position which acknowledges change will happen, but which also asserts that human rights and worker rights will continue to be important, and that nations and societies have some capacity to determine the shape of the future, and must do so in a socially responsible way.
- 1.5 The primary responsibility of teachers is always to their students. Their responsibility is to educate and prepare those students for life. Whilst this includes the vocational aspects, (including their industrial rights and the role of unions), it must not ignore the social, political, cultural and environmental aspects.
- 1.6 In responding to the questions in the Discussion Paper, the AEU has taken an approach which makes general comments relevant to each set of questions rather than specific responses to the individual questions. This approach is taken to ensure that the appropriateness and validity of the questions is set in a context which examines the assumptions behind them.

The numbers in brackets refer to the relevant questions in the Discussion Paper.

## **2 Definition**

- 2.1 The definition of innovation that is used in the is extremely narrow. It seems to define innovation as being only about those activities capable of commercialisation, and even more specifically those activities which lead to production and profit for private business.
- 2.2 Innovation has much wider connotations. Even within the spectrum of economic activity it should include activities related to the arts and culture, which contribute to tourism and an entertainment industry. It should also include areas such as community activities, social institutions and public services where innovative approaches may have considerable benefits.
- 2.3 Creating an innovative climate but seeking to confine it only to those elements with an economic benefit is not likely to succeed.
- 2.4 This AEU response is based on an understanding of innovation which goes beyond these narrow definitions and sees innovation as potentially existing in the social, political and cultural aspects of learning and life, not just the economic.
- 2.5 There is also a tendency to inadequately distinguish between innovation and change. Not all change is innovation, and this should be clarified.
- 2.6 Not all change or innovation is desirable. It is reasonable to talk about quality effects, both good and bad, of change and innovation.
- 2.7 Innovation should also be set in a range of other values. Are the innovations ethical, do they enhance professional practice, are they in the interests of students, do they improve student outcomes, and so on? It is, for instance, common to talk of such things as “innovative accounting” in a way that is derogatory of the methods used.
- 2.8 The word “creativity” seems preferable to “innovation” in many contexts.

### **3 Creating Innovative Cultures (Key Questions 1.1 – 1.3)**

#### **3.1 Focussing on Innovative students**

- 3.1.1 The , importantly, places an emphasis on creating innovative students. Such an emphasis focuses the discussion on a clear outcome and avoids more general calls for innovation in a range of other contexts.
- 3.1.2 The creation of innovative climates would seem to be a prerequisite for the encouragement of innovative students. However, the Paper does well not to confuse the pursuit of this with the creation of innovative schools and assessing teachers on their innovations and innovative capacities.
- 3.1.3 Whilst there is clearly some connection between teaching innovatively, innovative schools and innovative students, it is not productive to confuse them or regard them as part of the same package. It should not be assumed that the most innovative students arise from situations of perpetual change or experimentation.
- 3.1.4 Therefore the emphasis in the Discussion Paper leaves open the opportunity to investigate and develop the best means to achieve an innovative culture, and the AEU believes that is as it should be in the present circumstances.

#### **3.2 Governments, Systems and innovation**

- 3.2.1 The creation of an innovative climate is not purely a within-school matter as the Paper seems to assume. Therefore the role of governments and systems must be considered.
- 3.2.2 Governments are responsible for the funding of public schools and the policies within which they operate.
- 3.2.3 They are also responsible for the nature of the final examination system. The current dominance of tertiary selection within this, and therefore the dominant influence of universities on the nature of the school curriculum must be viewed as a major barrier to more innovative practices in schools. The reality is that school success as judged by the number of students going on to university and the type of course they are entering is a major factor in the public's assessment of the quality of any school. Attempts to broaden the scope of the final examination to include more vocational subjects, as in the original Victorian Certificate of Education (VCE), have been fraught with difficulty and opposition from some in universities and elsewhere. In general, this influence operates to entrench a conservative curriculum and discourage schools from trying new ways of looking at knowledge.
- 3.2.4 Similarly, government testing policies such as Basic Skills Tests and, in NSW the School Certificate external examinations at the end of Year 10, tend to impose the sort of constraints on teachers and schools in terms of curriculum that are most likely to result in schooling that is fundamentally dull, and is therefore not conducive to encouraging innovation in either teachers or students.
- 3.2.5 There is then a need for Government policy to clearly support curriculum reform in schools. This is not always the case at present.

- 3.2.6 Most schools are inadequately funded. They certainly lack the money to feel able to take risks. In particular, staffing is too tight to allow the allocation of time to look at new ideas, to build up appropriate partnerships with business and the community, to spend time on internal development, and to purchase equipment that is not clearly needed. Systems need to examine both the quantum and the allocation processes of funding to ensure that it supports the desired approach. This needs to acknowledge that innovation is not cost neutral, and ensure that there is staffing for additional work.
- 3.2.7 Much of the funding that has been allocated to areas that can be considered part of the innovation agenda has been short term and submission based. This discourages longer term planning and benefits those schools with a capacity to write the submissions. There needs to be a longer term and more generally applied approach if all schools are to be supported. The current process seems to be intended more to create exemplars of practice which can be used against schools “not doing it right”, rather than create genuine change.
- 3.2.8 The AEU also notes that the Howard government ceased funding the National Schools Network when it came to power in 1996. This remains one of the most promising innovative initiatives with schools which involved teachers, was supported by unions, and created discussion and ideas about change. To the extent that the funding has been replaced elsewhere, it has been to programs that do not have these characteristics.
- 3.2.9 Governments must also take a lead role in explaining to the public what the desirable outcomes from schooling are. The public in general has an inherently conservative attitude to schooling with an instinctive concentration on those aspects that were valued when they were at school. It is important that the government create an atmosphere which is conducive to schools changing and adapting to what they are being told is needed.
- 3.2.10 A tendency has emerged over the past two decades for governments to not take responsibility for schools and the attitude of the public to them, but rather to stimulate a market based approach in which those perceived as “successful” become desired, and those less successful less desired. The problem with this approach is that there is considerable evidence that it creates a climate of uniformity and conservatism which is not conducive to risk taking and progressive change.
- 3.2.11 The failure of government to allocate even adequate funding to research and development in Australia, particularly through the tertiary education sector, is calculated to ensure that the very characteristics of schooling and the application of knowledge that the Paper is fostering are unlikely to be achieved. Innovation depends to a large extent on risk taking and lateral thinking. Often these will not occur outside an environment where funding is available to underpin such risks. New ways, and the extension of current approaches, of encouraging innovative learning and thinking in students require funded research (as is detailed in Section 6 of this submission particularly concerning the relationship between universities and schools). None of this can or will happen without financial backing from the Commonwealth government, whose current record here is abysmal.

### 3.3 **Teachers, Schools and Innovation**

- 3.3.1 The characteristics of schools with an innovative climate are likely to include:

- schools as learning organisations with many opportunities for ongoing professional learning;
- high levels of professional empowerment in which the teacher and teachers collectively feel they have a real say in what and how things are taught, the way funds are spent, and other matters of school policy;
- therefore a high level of industrial democracy;
- a shared vision clearly articulated, developed collegially and in consultation with the students, parents and community;
- opportunities for both individual and collective reflection;
- an environment that encourages risk taking and supports and builds on failure as well as success;
- allocation of time and resources to build entrepreneurial and community links.

3.3.2 The creation of this is obviously dependent on high quality leadership. This will be discussed further below in the relevant section. However, two things should be noted at this point:

- The best of modern corporations have, we are told, flat structures with teams working together, a sharing of ideas and a valuing of everyone's input. By comparison many schools remain relatively hierarchical structures. The role of leader in this situation is to act as facilitator to enable this to happen.
- It follows from this that whilst leadership is very important, notions of reform which over emphasise the role of the individual leader as someone who is dominant, authoritative and coerces change, which tend to be portrayed in some education circles, are unlikely to bring about the necessary climate.

3.3.3 It should also be recognised that some of the best examples of innovative practice have occurred where schools have worked and planned together in clusters. Therefore the creation of cooperative relationships between schools is an important consideration.

#### 3.4 **Students, the Curriculum and Innovation**

3.4.1 The Discussion Paper seems to assume that there is a direct link between a concentration on teaching certain subjects and making students more innovative in those subjects. There would appear to be real dangers in defining innovation as an area which is dominated by the science and mathematics disciplines. Surely we need innovative social thinkers and artists? Such a narrow view may well restrict innovation. The creation of a vibrant and innovative culture is unlikely to be achieved by a restrictive focus on certain disciplines.

3.4.2 It may well be that making students more innovative in, say, science, is achieved by their activities in other subjects, for instance the arts or the social sciences. Whilst content knowledge is obviously important, if this is at the expense of reducing the more creative elements of the curriculum, then it could be counter productive, and the AEU believes that this needs investigation before conclusions are assumed.

3.4.3 Whatever students may be interested in there are ways of encouraging them to look at a range of options and approaches which are different to traditional ways. Engendering an attitude that seeks alternatives and encourages lateral thinking across the curriculum is a more productive way of creating an innovative climate than a concentration on those subjects which are believed, rightly or wrongly, to be more likely applicable to the

commercial application of innovations. Teachers can also more easily understand the expectations of them when expressed in this way.

- 3.4.4 The development of new approaches to the curriculum, such as through the “New Basics” in Queensland, seem to offer better and more integrated ways of approaching the curriculum by combining and integrating disciplines and producing greater carry over from one area to another. They offer a new framework which is future oriented and creates trans-disciplinary team work.
- 3.4.5 The work on productive pedagogies which has been carried out in Queensland is also very useful.
- 3.4.6 There are also problems in assuming that greater contact and experience of industry by both students and teachers will automatically lead to greater innovation. If the current problem is a lack of innovation in industry, then experience of current practice might not be the best education! Therefore the quality of experiences in workplaces is important.
- 3.4.7 In arguing these points, the AEU is not suggesting it is opposed to either more improvements in teaching certain subjects or work experience for either students or teachers, but is arguing that the means to the end not be determined in the absence of investigation. The Paper clearly identifies an objective of creating more innovative students as a desirable outcome. The conclusions should leave room to find the most effective ways of reaching this, not be used as a basis for pursuing any particular agendas.
- 3.4.8 As noted above, there is also a tendency to over emphasise the “newness” of innovation as a concept, and to suggest that the demands of the “knowledge society” require sudden and radical changes in schools. Polarised scenarios are then presented between current practice as out of date and inappropriate, and a need for “new teaching” to create different outcomes.

Change in schools has been a constant over the past decade and practice has been adopted to these changes. It is not particularly helpful to exaggerate the extent of current change and to imply it is a complete break with the past. This is alienating to the teachers that are being asked to change, who tend to be portrayed as out of date within these scenarios. In fact some of the generalisation in the Paper would indicate that the writers are out of touch with what is happening already in schools. It also ignores the considerable knowledge and experience which they bring to the situation.

- 3.4.9 In reality, objectives such as creating lateral thinkers and independent learners, and teaching students how to learn are not new concepts in education, and to imply that they are, is to ignore history and the benefits that history can lend, both in terms of successful practice and of the difficulties and obstacles that have lead to less successful implementations.
- 3.4.10 There are signs in the educational literature that the word “innovation” is becoming modish, that people are attaching to it a range of ill defined and basically intellectually thin catch cries, often motivated by pre-determined agendas. What seems to be lacking is a considered and open debate about what the really important elements of student learning in the context in which we now find ourselves are, in the twenty first century, with the new technology and so on.

### 3.5 Equity, Disadvantage and Innovation

- 3.5.1 The issue of equity and disadvantage and how it relates to the objective of innovative students requires particular consideration.
- 3.5.2 The AEU commends to the Review the publication “Schooling the Rustbelt Kids” by Pat Thomson (Allen and Unwin, 2003). It is an excellent explication of the problems being faced by students and schools in those areas which are currently most affected by the changes in manufacturing industry and the decline in employment opportunities. It illustrates the compounding of problems that schools in such areas face, and the fact that they have both greater obstacles to overcome and a greater need to overcome those obstacles with urgency.
- 3.5.3 It reinforces the fact that the issues do not lie within schools in isolation from the communities they are in, and that approaches often need to be on a broader front than purely within a school.
- 3.5.4 The lack of opportunity for work experience and contact with industry is an obvious example of the compounding of problems. The difficulty in attracting staff is another. The overall lack of community resources shows that the disadvantage is community based and this presents particular problems for those schools.
- 3.5.5 Such schools must receive special help if they are to achieve comparable outcomes. This help needs also to be community based, and involve all levels of government applied at the local level. The AEU supports the concept of full service schools, and believes that there must be links between schools, communities, business and governments to ameliorate the impact of the multiple effects felt by these schools.
- 3.5.6 Similarly, the National Inquiry into Rural and Remote Education (HEREOC, 2000) drew particular attention to the compounding effect of all forms of disadvantage when associated with rurality or remoteness. “Access to education is compromised by ill-health, disability, poverty, isolation, high mobility and transience ...” It notes the particular difficulty for teenagers in regard to work experience for those who cannot afford the travel and accommodation costs where there is no suitable local work placement.
- 3.5.7 The difficulties of staffing schools in disadvantaged rural and remote areas and the tendency for them to have both inexperienced and transitory teachers is discussed in the Vinson Report (Vinson, 2002, p.23).
- 3.5.8 It is also imperative that special attention be given to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, many of whom are already failed by the current school system and who are highly likely to be further disadvantaged by any changes. In many cases they also suffer from the inequities discussed above.

## 4 Changing School Practice (Key Questions 2.1-2.3)

- 4.1 Much of the AEU’s response in regard to curriculum and pedagogy is given in 3.4 above.
- 4.1.1 It is again worth reiterating that much of what is needed is not new, though the extent to which it is common practice varies. The following are all pertinent:

- Negotiated curriculum;
  - Real world activities;
  - Critical literacy including analysis of media ;
  - Problem solving and research;
  - Negotiated pathways;
  - Community activities;
  - The ability to think, not to follow;
  - Involvement in innovative programs.
- 4.2 Philosophy for children, a program that is emerging in some schools, is becoming highly regarded for its capacity to stimulate students thought and analytical processes. It is also an excellent example of how something outside the science, maths and technology areas may benefit an innovative approach in those areas. The debates and critical analyses of issues that arise in SOSE and English courses are equally illustrative of the importance of not ignoring the curriculum beyond science, maths, and technology.
- 4.3 It is also important that students be taught to think critically, and that it is recognised that being critical includes being critical of workplace conditions and a willingness to challenge and question a whole range of things. At times there appears to be a contradiction in the business community about whether they want a compliant workforce or a thinking one. The two are to a degree mutually exclusive.
- 4.4 Particular attention must be given to aligning curriculum, assessment and pedagogy. Too often the nature of assessment encourages an approach to curriculum and pedagogy which does not stimulate and encourage lateral thinking. Again, the new basics, and its proposed forms of assessment are worth noting. Conversely, the emphasis on basic skills testing implies an antithetical approach. It appears indicative of what is required of teachers and is not balanced by other emphasises. The AEU is also concerned that much of what is being said about employability skills suggests a similar approach, which is paradoxical given the stated intentions.
- 4.5 The growth of VET in schools is generally seen as part of the changes to the new requirements. However, it must be recognised that much of what currently occurs under the rubric of VET in schools is quite routine. The emphasis on competencies and becoming employable does not lend itself to encouraging lateral and innovative thinking.
- 4.6 The AEU has argued in a number of forums for a national plan for preschool education coordinated through MCEETYA, including national goals, standards and a policy framework to ensure universal access to a high quality, free public preschool education within an overall framework of public education. In partnership with the states and territories, the Commonwealth should contribute to funding preschool education. Principles for cooperative Commonwealth - state/territory funding arrangements should include provision for a national Preschool Equity Program based on the numbers of children identified as disadvantaged or having special needs, targeted both at increasing participation and at redressing disadvantage/meeting special educational needs.
- 4.6.1 As Hull and Edsall (No Small Matter, Quality Preschools Benefit Children and Society, 2001, AEU, South Melbourne) have noted in their summary of the research findings:

- preschool has a positive effect on intellectual and social skills, independent of background, when centres provide quality in terms of physical surroundings and adult/child interactions;
- preschool improves children's ability to think and reason as they enter school, enabling them to learn more in the early grades. Even if the IQ advantage fades (this was not conclusive), their learning accumulates and their success keeps them 'on track' toward high school completion;
- for children from very deprived socioeconomic backgrounds, preschool makes a difference in intellectual progress and the acquisition of positive attitudes and motivation to succeed in school (2001, p v)

4.6.2 The Report on Government Services 2002 has indicated that around 83.7% of 4 year olds (5 year olds in WA) attended preschool in the year prior to school in 2000-01. This ranges from 100% in Queensland to 64.3% in NSW, although there are some reasons for caution in data interpretation.

Nonetheless, more than 16% of children in Australia miss out on preschool education. A conservative estimate would be that over 40,000 children are missing out and research indicates that often, children from low income and disadvantaged families are most likely to miss out.

## **5 School organisation and governance (Key Questions 3.1 to 3.4)**

- 5.1 It appears to have become the orthodoxy in the futures debate to seek to draw links between a capacity to meet future education needs and greater degrees of devolved or decentralised decision making. Within this scenario public schools, in particular, are painted as overburdened with regulation and inflexible funding arrangements, it is suggested they are unable to make the necessary decisions at the school level to adapt to the needs of the knowledge society, and are bound by appointment practices that prevent them appointing the teachers most capable of fulfilling their needs. Industrial regulation and unions are painted as barriers to progress. In its place a choice and diversity model which will encourage competition and deregulation is proposed.
- 5.2 This appears to have more to do with the predilections and position in the systems of those who are leading the debate than any evidence based on actual experience or objective research.
- 5.3 Indeed, there appears to be paradox in the pursuit of greater devolution as it is currently expressed and some of the other objectives of the agenda.

For instance, both ICT and VET in schools are identified as key elements of the new agenda.

VET has been introduced into schools in a way that largely devolves the responsibility for meeting what are tightly and centrally controlled regulations onto schools without the support and funding that will ensure its success.

In the case of ICT, especially, devolution of both responsibility and incorporation into teaching and learning, and infrastructure provision has often increased inequities between schools as capacity to purchase has been largely determined by the school's ability to raise funds. One result has been a concentration on the promotional and advertising benefits of

ICT rather than the educational. The situation is only stabilising through the closer involvement of systems.

VET in schools, despite its espoused importance, runs on a shoestring. It relies heavily on the commitment, personal dedication, and goodwill of teachers who cannot sustain the current effort without greater support. Much of the funding has been “seed” funding, which means it is short term, unreliable and is withdrawn just when it is producing something worthwhile. Schools are then left to determine which other activities will have to go in order to sustain it.

The experience with both these innovations suggests there is considerable need for more supportive structures, and greater acceptance of funding for innovation, from the centre.

- 5.4 The AEU believes that the current debate around devolution and decentralisation is too simplistic. It is conducted with all the fervour of a religious crusade, with little reference to real educational effectiveness. It is presented as a simple “decentralisation good, centralisation bad” mantra.

The result in many cases has been that schools and particularly principals are actually overburdened with administrative and financial matters which prevent them becoming the educational leaders which most agree they need to be. It has frequently given rise to autocratic and idiosyncratic leadership rather than dispersed leadership and flatter structures. It has also created unhealthy competition rather than collaboration between schools.

The AEU believes that the debate needs to be more complex. There should be debate about where in the decision making process of any particular set of decisions should be placed to achieve maximum outcomes of specified objectives and what centralised support structures are needed to support it. This must include a benefit analysis for the whole system not just the interests of particular schools. This includes asking questions such as whether the overall equity of the system will be increased or decreased.

There also needs to be discussion about the location and nature of that decision making power that is devolved. Will it encourage teacher professional judgement and educational leadership, or principal autocracy? Will it encourage flatter structures and team work? Will it allow those at the school level to concentrate on educational outcomes, or leave them struggling to balance the books and running fund raising activities?

It is interesting to note that in the ACT curriculum decision making has been largely devolved to the school for many years, and this originally led to very worthwhile local curriculum development. However, this is now stalling due to a lack of resourcing. It is no good devolving the power without devolving the means to exercise that power.

Examples such as the Workplace Reform Initiative in Queensland, Alternative Work Organisation in NSW and the Victorian Agreement illustrate that it is possible to develop models of experimentation within current agreements where employing authorities are prepared to put the effort into creating agreement. Such agreements must be based on respect and understanding of the industrial implications and the rights of teachers, and employers must be prepared to enter into genuine processes.

Much of the criticism of the role of unions is indicative of a desire to ride roughshod over these considerations and symptomatic of a failure to seek to achieve reform by negotiation rather than decree.

- 5.5 Innovation can be encouraged and fostered within a cooperative ethos in the public system.
- 5.6 As noted above, schools tend to be more hierarchical than the best of modern business organisations. This conflicts with the need which has been articulated as desirable for innovative organisations for flat structures which encourage input from all participants. If schools are to produce more innovative students, they must themselves become models of innovative organisations.

This requires that they observe that the relationship between the various staff is based on the above principles, which will require greater levels of industrial democracy in many schools.

In addition, the students themselves need to feel they have a valued and acknowledged right to be part of the decision making and other formative processes of the school. This is not easy, and it obviously has to take account of their level of maturity and growing sense of responsibility. However, it is important that this becomes a target within schools, and that both theory and practice be developed.

Student Representative Councils (SRCs) provide a starting point for discussions in this area. They have encouraged and developed some outstanding individuals. However, there is concern that what is learnt and developed in the individuals involved does not trickle down sufficiently to the whole school population.

The AEU believes that much more could be done in schools to model and develop the practices of democratic societies in the way schools are organised.

## **6 Developing Teachers for Innovation (Key Questions 4.1 to 4.5)**

- 6.1 Professional development can take place in a multiplicity of contexts, both individual and collective, and there are a number of models which it is desirable to encourage and which can facilitate the growth of teaching for innovation.
- 6.2 Much of the best professional development takes place at the school level, involving whole schools. Whilst this may take the form of a period of time for self evaluation and discussion, it may involve more extended time spans. Models which involve action research over a period may be particularly beneficial. The Innovations Excellence clusters in Victoria are a good example of an action-research based model employing a teacher as an education-facilitator. It is also often productive to build an ongoing relationship with University academics, who can both assist in the evaluation and act as research consultants and advisers.
- 6.3 Post graduate qualifications remain an important avenue for professional development on an individual basis. There have been a growing number of instances where Universities are finding ways to credit professional development work conducted at the school level, and this should be encouraged.

- 6.4 HECS remains a considerable disincentive to teachers undertaking post graduate courses leading to qualifications and the AEU urges the Inquiry to recommend that this be waived for those courses clearly of professional benefit.
- 6.5 Teachers place considerable value on opportunities to meet with and discuss common interests with teachers from other schools, at Conferences and other meetings which allow interaction.
- 6.6 Teacher exchanges, where teachers spend a period of time in another school that has developed ideas in an area of common concern is one form of professional development that appears to offer considerable benefit in spreading good practice and which does not appear to be used to any extent at the moment.
- 6.7 Another very productive form of teacher exchange is the Victorian TRIP where teachers spend a year in industry. Also International Teaching Fellowships are worthy of extension.
- 6.8 The fundamental role of professional associations in leading professional development and professional learning should receive greater recognition.
- 6.9 However, it must be recognised that the whole area of professional development is grossly under funded. Much of what does take place is determined by system priorities rather than teacher initiated. There is a miserly attitude from employers which is a severe barrier to teacher learning.
- 6.10 Those programs which do exist achieve considerable outcomes for small outlays. The National Professional Development Program was particularly successful. It created extremely effective partnerships between groups of educators, teachers, schools, parents, unions, and universities for instance. Its benefits far outweighed the relatively minor costs. The AEU is bemused why the Commonwealth stopped funding it, presumably for purely political reasons. It should be re-instituted.

## 7 Leadership (Key Questions 5.1 to 5.5)

- 7.1 It is stating the obvious to say that leadership is the key to successful innovative practices. However, it is important to note that leadership can take many forms. At its worst, the emphasis on leadership has become little more than a rationalisation for autocracy, hierarchies and a focus on an individual. The managerial agenda which has been replaced in many innovative industries is still being promoted in educational systems and institutions.

Leadership must be dispersed. It is not separate from position, since the higher the position the more important it is to have leadership qualities. But it must not be monopolised by position. Indeed, one of the qualities of good leadership is the willingness to allow others to lead.

- 7.1.1 Those with a special responsibility for leadership must advocate for those in their school, provide opportunities, and recognise specific potential. In order to create innovation, they must support those seeking to innovate, accept that risk taking involves failure as well as success.
- 7.1.2 Leadership should be about organisational capacity building.

- 7.1.3 Bad leadership accepts poor morale. Good leadership is concerned with organisational well being. It raises morale and creates schools as caring places in which the welfare of all students and staff is of concern.
- 7.2 The issue of engaging teachers and their organisations is raised in 5.2 in the Paper. The words “need to be convinced of” are an inappropriate way of expressing this, and fortunately not characteristic of the general approach in the Discussion Paper.
- 7.2.1 It is regrettable that governments, departments and bureaucrats seemed to have lost the art of engaging teachers and of showing leadership rather than authority. It is not so much a case of convincing them as engaging them in discussions about their own profession and respecting their views and experiences. Much of the debate to date has had the characteristic of a core of committed, even converted, people outside teaching and certainly outside the classroom, telling (or preaching to) teachers about what they should be doing. At times, there seems to be little understanding of what they are actually doing at present and little attempt to work with them.
- 7.2.2 There seems to be a pervasive attitude amongst them that we have a lack lustre teaching force which must be by-passed in order to progress, rather than sincere attempts to engage them and help them to develop professionally.
- 7.2.3 Involvement of stakeholders in general in many consultative processes has become tokenistic, carefully managed, and not based on genuine respect for their views. Consultation is perfunctory and deliberately constrained by unworkable timelines.
- 7.2.4 Typically now inquiries are controlled by carefully selected committees of individuals rather than stakeholders. Stakeholders, if involved, are relegated to Reference Groups where their inputs can be used or not as decided by those on the Committee. The AEU has complained about this in relation to this Inquiry into Teaching and Teacher Education.
- 7.2.5 The AEU is finding it is increasingly not invited on to project management and similar committees and the like. This has become an issue of contention between it and DEST. The AEU is the major representative of teachers. Teachers indicate that they have more confidence in the AEU than others who claim to represent the profession, and yet DEST and at times other government agencies persistently seek alternative representation.
- 7.3 It is noticeable that the Enterprise and Career Education Foundation (ECEP) as a body with a major role in introducing changes into schools around VET no longer has AEU representation on its Board, has been deliberately constructed to by-pass teacher organisations, and has few people with a teaching background involved in its activities.
- 7.4 The relationship between industry and education is an important one, but it will not achieve its potential without stronger input from those with first hand and current experience in the field of education. This input should be at the level, for example, of the Board of ECEF and ANTA, and in the processes involved in the development of National Training Packages. The input is necessary for a number of reasons, not the least of which is developing a relationship of trust and respect between these sectors.

- 7.5 Teachers and educational stakeholders will not be convinced until they are encouraged to become involved in all aspects of the process, and are part of the process rather than being “done unto” in a top down fashion.
- 7.6 Similarly, much of the current research that emanates from DEST and other government departments does not resonate with teachers. It is generally commissioned work by researchers who are perceived as delivering what the government wants. Unfortunately, this is the case with the work on innovation. Research that has been developed to further a pre-determined agenda is not likely to convince anyone.
- 7.7 There is a clear and urgent need for a consultative body along the lines of the previous Schools Council or even Schools Commission, which has the capacity to listen to all voices in the education debate, seek genuine and objective research, and build consensus about how to progress.