Educational Investment in Australian Schooling: Serving Public Purposes in Tasmanian Primary Schools

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Chapter 1: Introduction and overview

1.1 Introduction

Behind every new educational strategy or policy is an assumption about the contribution that it will make to the purposes of schooling. And yet these purposes are rarely the subject of extended public or professional debate. It is our view that at this point in Australia’s history there is a need to bring them to centre stage.

Formal education institutions like schools have always served a number of purposes. Some purposes can be described as primarily public in that they advance the interests of society as a whole; others are primarily private in that they promote the interests of individuals. We say ‘primarily’ because there is not a stark distinction between public and private purposes: it is a matter of emphasis. Thus private purposes can contribute to the public good in a circumscribed way, just as public purposes can accrue benefits to individuals.

Following Labaree (1997), there are three broad purposes of schooling:

- **democratic equality**, which is about a society preparing all of its young people to be active and competent citizens. Since we depend on the collective judgment of the whole citizenry then an education based on the goal of democratic equality is clearly a public good;
- **social efficiency**, which is about preparing young people to be competent and productive workers. To the extent that we all benefit from an economy that is working well, then an education based on the goal of social efficiency is a public good. But it is a public good that also has a strong private purpose since it results in economic rewards for individuals;
- **social mobility**, which is about providing individuals with a credential which will advantage them in the competition for desirable social positions. This goal constructs education as a commodity which can be traded in, say, the labour market. As such an education based on a goal of social mobility is a private good which serves mainly private purposes.

In any democratic society, state funded educational institutions (in Australia this covers state and ‘private’ schools) will always serve both public and private purposes: it is a matter of balance. In different historical times there have been shifts in the emphasis. The question of whether the right balance has been achieved at any point in time is an important, although neglected, one in debates about public policy. In the 1970s in Australia, for example, there was a strong emphasis on the public purposes of schooling as enacted and practised through policies based on philosophies of equity, access and participation. While these policies served private purposes in the sense that they enhanced the life trajectories of individuals, they had a dominantly democratic equality (public) purpose which aimed at enriching the economic, cultural and political life of Australian society through a more broadly educated citizenry and workforce.

In the contemporary period, by contrast, education policy and practice foregrounds the social efficiency and social mobility (private) purposes of schools and backgrounds the democratic equality (public) purpose. This is the result of the dominance of at least two intersecting ideologies – neo-liberalism and neo-conservatism – which have shaped three modalities of

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1 From the material produced for the Australian Research Council Linkage Grant (see Appendix 1).
schooling: the organisation of schooling, curriculum, and the processes of schools and school systems, in ways that construct education as a largely private commodity. For example:

- **Organisation of schooling**: The dominance of neo-liberal policy has tended to place a greater emphasis on the individual in an education market and so privilege the social mobility purpose of schooling. This has affected not only what schools are required to teach, but also how they operate. In particular, schools are expected to win market share by appealing to and satisfying the needs and wants of individual ‘consumers’ (parents and students). This has created a focus on the individual benefits of education at the expense of its public purposes. At best, the public good is seen increasingly as simply an aggregation of individual preferences;

- **Curriculum**: From a neo-liberal perspective, education is seen as pivotal to the development of ‘human capital’ and thus as fulfilling a social efficiency purpose. In this way, the vocational purposes of schooling are fore-grounded at the expense of a broader general education. More than this there is a return to the vocational-academic binary with separate (and inevitably stratified) curricula and even separate schools. Where the democratic equality purpose exists, it is in diluted form. Thus, equity and access is promoted on social efficiency grounds (more students at school for longer is good for the economy), and the curriculum tends to privilege the life of the individual and consumer more than the active and engaged citizen;

- **Processes of schools and school systems**: Neo-liberal ideology has imported ideas, techniques and practices from the private sector in order to make education more business-like. Thus the ways in which concepts such as ‘choice’, ‘accountability’, ‘school effectiveness’, and ‘devolution’ are used tend to rework education as an object of profit. Associated with this are the regimes of performativity which force schools to compete for ‘market share’ through such mechanisms as league tables. The effects of this are to weaken, if not distort, the democratic equality purposes of education.

We contend that the large number of expectations on schools (as illustrated in this book’s cover) and especially the current emphasis on the private purposes of education is unhealthy for Australian society, not least because it runs the danger of producing self interested, competitive and culturally bound individuals who are more interested in their own self-advancement than they are in making a contribution to the common good. In a globalising world where the role of the nation-state is changing and societies are becoming increasingly culturally diverse, schools are needed more than ever for the important public purpose of forming active citizens for democratic publics - people with the will and commitment to shape, and participate in, an inclusive and democratic civil society and polity that are responsive to the new environment.

Recent education reports and longitudinal UK research support our contention. For example, the report on the future of schooling in Australia by the States and Territories (Federalist Paper 2, 2007) warns against narrowing the curriculum and reasserts the importance of the Adelaide Declaration (MCEETYA, 1999) goals with its commitment to a broad curriculum designed to foster the understandings, skills and dispositions needed for life in a globalising world. And a recent report by the Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry uses the results of a survey undertaken with over 1,000 businesses to argue that a mismatch exists between what employers want and what they are getting from the education system: “Australia’s education and training systems must provide people with the knowledge, skills and attitudes they need to participate fully in Australian society – culturally, socially and in their employment.” (ACCI, 2007, p. 18). The importance of the democratic equality (public) purposes of education is also highlighted in three high quality longitudinal research studies from the UK (Feinstein, 2000; Carneiro et al, 2006; Margo et al, 2006) which use data from studies of British children over many years to conclude that the development of social and
cultural capabilities – and not just a narrow band of ‘academic’ studies - are central to future life opportunities (this evidence is expanded in Chapter 2).

It is clear that the disjuncture between these sorts of research findings and the effects of current education policy demands a fresh look at the goals for Australian schooling. And yet it is not a blank slate. Despite current policy directions, many schools seem to be working against the odds to enact education as a public good. So, before it is possible to establish what changes might be needed, there is an important task of assessing how the democratic equality purpose of schools is currently understood, represented and practiced in schools and schooling systems, and the extent to which the social mobility and social efficiency purposes are working against its realisation.

1.2 Chapter Overview

Serving public purposes in Tasmania primary schools forms part of the four-state (Queensland, South Australia, Tasmania, and Victoria) research project “Educational Investment in Australian Schooling: Serving Public Purposes” that aims to better understand current views about and the enactment of the public purposes of our schools (see Appendix for further details). Tasmania’s contribution to this project forms the chapters of this book.

Chapter two examines the forces impacting upon Australian schools and some implications for school leaders. The implications include the need to choose between competing forces, broaden what counts as good schooling and re-examine the way schools are organised and run, especially so that they emphasise social capital and the development of communities of professional learners.

Chapter three reviews educational priorities in Tasmania through an examination of recent Department of Education policy documents and interviews with the Minister for Education, Secretary of the Department of Education and President of the Australian Council of State School Organisations. It is concluded that there is a mismatch between policy statements and actual priorities and practice.

Chapter four looks at the role of the media in setting educational purposes. Specifically, it examines Hobart’s Mercury newspaper’s reporting of the Tasmanian Essential Learnings Curriculum (ELs), a curriculum that gave a strong emphasis to the public purposes of education. It is concluded that the ELs story is not an encouraging one for the enactment of the public purposes of education. The Mercury newspaper was found to have a major role in the ELs demise and the return to a traditional subject based curriculum.

Chapter five outlines the Tasmanian results from a national survey of Australian primary school principals on the importance of and the degree to which enactment occurs on different purposes of schools and the strategies used to achieve these purposes. An open ended section in the survey also sought primary principal views on the factors which help to promote or hinder the public purposes of schools. What is clear from the survey is that Tasmanian primary principals rate both the importance and enactment of public purposes and strategies most highly and private purposes and strategies most lowly.

Statistically significant differences were found among Tasmania primary principals on the basis of a number of demographic variables, especially school size and principal experience. These differences suggest that it takes time as a principal to wean oneself from the system and be able to stand on one’s own two professional feet. It may also be that support for and
enactment of the public purposes of education are more likely with a great deal of experience both as a principal and in one’s school.

The results also suggest a greater dissatisfaction exists amongst Tasmanian primary principals than Australia-wide. The greatest difference/dissatisfaction for Tasmanian primary principals related to strategies originating outside schools at the system level. These strategies included collaboration, enrolment policies, assessment, and resourcing. Inadequate resourcing and support and unsympathetic politicians and bureaucracies (such as their insistence on one size fits all approaches, including for curriculum and assessment through testing) are seen to contribute to an uneven playing field, especially in comparison with the private schooling sector, and difficulties in successfully catering for a diverse student population and facilitating a socially just, equitable, cohesive, and inclusive society.

Chapter six provides a rich longitudinal description of the successful enactment of public purposes in one best practice Tasmanian primary school. The school’s understandings of public purposes, the way they enact these public purposes and the factors helping and hindering this enactment are detailed. Consistent with the implications arising from the examination of the forces impacting on Australian schools, the importance of social capital and the development of communities of professional learners are highlighted.

The concluding chapter, Chapter seven, compares what was learnt about the forces impacting on today’s schools, including from policy and the media, with principals’ beliefs about the purposes of education and the strategies used to achieve these purposes and what was learnt about successful enactment in one Tasmanian primary school. The Chapter concludes with nine recommendations that we believe need to be seriously considered if the investment in Tasmanian primary schools is to successfully serve the public good.

### 1.3 References


Chapter 2: The forces impacting upon Australian schools and some implications for school leaders

2.1 Introduction: A compass for a complex, changing, challenging landscape

Australian schools have always been seen as central to the project of nation building. However, since the start of the 21st century, the purposes of Australian schools have been placed even more directly under the microscope due to the impact of a number of trends, influences or ‘forces’, such as technological change, the increasing diversity of the Australian population, the growth of a knowledge-based society and the globalisation of the economy, cultures and environment.

Taken together, these forces are challenging the very nature of schooling (Australian Council of Deans of Education (ACDE), 2004). They are causing educational organisations and systems around the world to broaden and personalise curricula (e.g., DfES, 2005; Leadbeater, 2004a, 2004b, & 2005) and to rethink school structures (Marginson, 1997; OECD, 2001a; Hartley, 1997; Levin & Riffel, 1997). In Australia there has been a flurry of activity designed to broaden the curricula by foregrounding generic skills and capabilities (e.g., Government of South Australia, 2006; Tasmanian Department of Education, 2005). And yet this activity is proceeding in the absence of an ongoing conversation that joins together this context, its implications for the organisation of schools and the implications of both for school leaders.

The position taken in this chapter is that school leaders have to be part of this conversation. While none of us can know what the future holds, we can work to shape that future, to make sure that, as far as possible, what happens is what we want to have happen. Occasionally school leaders need to position themselves so that they are able to see ‘the bigger picture’; to detach themselves from the hurly-burly of the moment, gain a more distant view of issues that are close by and pressing (Heifetz & Linsky, 2002). But care is needed. When lost on a highway, a road map is very useful; but when one is lost in a world where the topography, such as that provided by the education systems and structures that serve it, is constantly changing, a road map is of little help. A simple compass, something that indicates the general direction to be taken, is helpful, however.

The next section aims to provide just such a compass. It identifies and examines some cardinal points, or forces relevant to the terrain, and analyses some implications of each for schools and their leaders. The forces are advances in science and technology, changes in demography, globalisation, and pressures on the environment. A second section examines these implications in greater detail under the three headings: the need to choose between competing pressures created by the forces, especially between constant change and continuity, dependence and independence, individualism and community and homogeneity and heterogeneity; the need to broaden what counts as good schooling, especially to include social skills; and, ensuring that the way schools are organised and run is consistent with both of

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these needs, especially through greater use of living systems, deep democracy, personalisation through participation, and networks.

All three implications urge far greater attention on the public purposes and processes of education than is currently the case. A third and final section takes these implications for school leader practice further by combining the material in the first two sections under the related ‘public’ concepts of social capital and communities of professional learners.

2.2 The forces

What are the forces that will shape the world in which we will live, work and provide education? In an attempt to introduce some structure to the plethora of literature in the area, this section will first examine two ‘determining’ forces (the ‘north’ and ‘south’ cardinal points of the compass) of the advances in science and technology and changes in demography (including change in the nature of work). These two forces are followed by two others (the ‘east’ and ‘west’ points), that is, globalisation and pressures on the environment. The speed with which all of these changes are taking place is seen by some (Sturgess, 2006) as inevitable. The question is not how they might be avoided, but what we must do to adapt.

Although the forces are examined independently of each other, it is clear that these forces are interrelated. For example, advances in contraception have led to a lowering of fertility rates, and advances in medicine have led to increased life expectancy; both have had a major impact on demographic trends. Faster and cheaper communication and travel have impacted on globalisation. More people and the concomitant increased demand for fossil fuels has contributed to global warming, which, in turn, has had a major impact on the world’s environment.

2.2.1 Advances in science and technology

Throughout history, technological innovations have redistributed power, enabled a tribe, a people or a nation to vie for and gain dominance over other groups. Fire, ferrous metal, farming and firearms are all historic discoveries that transformed nations and facilitated the
transference of power. Modern examples include internal combustion engines, interchangeable parts, electrical energy and electronic components. Ever more efficient transport and communications, greater automation, the use of computers and even the wide-scale availability of medical discoveries, continue to impact massively on the world around us (Mulford, 1994).

The links between scientific and technological change and our world view have become increasingly clear. Automation and computers have facilitated data storage and retrieval at a very fast pace. Communication and transport systems allow us to be less time or place bound. Ease of travel facilitates greater immigration (including illegal). There are shifts in the demography of populations as a result of the combined effects of advances in, and growing acceptance of, contraceptives, work opportunities (rural/urban) and longevity. Education, research on the brain and learning styles indicates a need for a much more varied approach to teaching than the standard teacher-focused format (Harris, 2006).

The pace of scientific and technological change has and will continue to increase exponentially. For example, increases in bandwidth will lead to a rise in Internet-based services. Access to video and television (Gilbert, 2006) will increase. Costs associated with hardware, software and data storage will decrease, resulting in the opportunity for near-universal access to personal, multi-functional devices, smarter software integrated with global standards and increasing amounts of information being available to search online (using everything from Google and Yahoo to the more recent development with Wikipedia, Blogger, YouTube, MySpace, SecondLife, and del.icio.us). Wikipedia’s founder, Jimmy Wales, has defined Wikipedia as ‘a world in which every single person … is given free access to the sum of all human knowledge’ (Harris, 2006, p. 10). These developments mean there will be far greater access to, and reliance on, technology as a means of conducting daily interactions and transactions, including in schools (Margo et al., 2006).

What will be some of the results of these advances in science and technology for school leaders? People will expect and demand immediate responses, customised solutions and access to information. Technology will enable customised learning to occur any time, any place. It expands the options and choices individuals and families have in all aspects of their lives, including education. Information and digital technologies could increasingly move the control of learning away from educational institutions and towards individuals (McREL, 2005). There will be less need to systematically acquire ‘authorised’ knowledge from, and sequenced and packaged by, experts. Knowledge/evidence will be increasingly constructed socially and in a non-linear fashion.

Advances in science and technology have resulted in pressures on both individuals and their organisations. These pressures have particular implications for schools and their leaders and require answers to several key questions - answers that are clearly located within the public arena.

- While the beauty of the Internet is that it connects people, will it remain free and publicly accessible? Will the ‘digital divide’ persist, thus ensuring the underprivileged in our society no longer miss out (the issue of equity)?

- Will attitudes and skills need to be taught to assist people to make wise choices in handling increased amounts of information and change? Anonymous information, like that contained within Wikipedia, is faux-authoritative and anti-contextual. The risk is in the aggregator (YouTube, Wikipedia, and search engines such as Google) becoming more important than the aggregated information, which lacks verification. There is also a danger in the blurring of boundaries between reality and unreality; for example, increasingly sophisticated computer games blur the distinction between entertainment and real life, or reality TV and talk shows.

- With the move to greater individualisation, fanned by technological advances such as mobile phones and MP3 players, will communities become more fragmented? For
example, what will the impact of advances in technology be on our sense of security – will we feel more secure or more vulnerable to hackers, criminals and terrorists? An elementary level of trust is necessary for community. Where can such trust be established, if not in our homes and schools? How can schools act to support the development of trust?

2.2.2 Changes in demography

Changes in demography, including changes in the nature of work, are leading to an increase in the proportion of elderly and urban dwellers in the population. Developing country populations are increasing at a much more dramatic rate than developed country populations. Commentators have argued that the evolution of a massively increased urban/suburban landscape and developing and developed country populations has promoted a growing separation between people by income, class, and, to a lesser extent, race (Harris, 2006). There will be a more ethnically and socially diverse society and a different generation will move into positions of authority and power. Worldwide, the change of generation will further exacerbate changes in the nature of work.

The Australia Government’s Department of Treasury Intergenerational Report (Costello, 2007) outlines the challenges Australia faces as our population inevitably and irreversibly ages. After 2010, the dependence ratio – that is the ratio of children and older people to people of working age – is expected to increase even more rapidly, as baby boomers reach aged pension age. This report highlights a number of ‘public’ needs, including: developing policies which make it easier for families to have children, such as workplace flexibility and support for families; increased engagement in the workforce of those who are marginalised, to increase participation and improve their self-esteem; and, policies that support increased diversity in the culture, language and ability.

Change in the nature of work has also become pervasive (Rankin, 2005), especially with the marketplace becoming the arbiter. The move to the service and information sectors as trade in manufactures follows agricultural commodities down the path of ever-reducing relative importance. It could be suggested that Australia will not succeed in the 21st century by focusing largely on exported goods, when more than 50 per cent of world trade is in services (including tourism and education). Added to this is the fact that the majority of Australia’s exports will be to the most populous and fastest growing region of the world, the Asia-Pacific region. This is a region where some countries have leap-frogged right over the industrial period and are now operating in an information economy, where the most important resources do not come from the ground but from people. In these circumstances, the ability to work well with others, including those from other cultures, is the fundamental competency.

Some of the implications for schools, which derive directly from these demographic changes, include high levels of retirement among teachers and school leaders is leading to shortages in supply. The teaching profession, on average, is likely to be younger than currently, less experienced and not representative of the broad ethnic composition of the population. In fact, the demographics of the current pool of teachers compared to the pool of students indicate the potential for cultural disconnection. Also, career advancement processes are likely to lead to the best and most experienced teachers migrating to the most privileged environments (Harris, 2006). With greater globalisation this migration could also increasingly be interstate and/or overseas.

Demographic changes to the population will mean that a different generation, those born from the 1980s onwards, the New Millenial Learner (NML), will populate our schools – as students and, increasingly, as staff. Linking demographic and technical forces, the Millenials are the first generation to grow up surrounded by digital media, and much of their activity involving peer-to-peer communication and knowledge management is mediated by these technologies (Howe & Strauss, 2000). Also called ‘Homo Zappiens’ (Veen, 2003), they are skilled at multitasking and controlling simultaneously different sources of digital information.
in a world where ubiquitous and immediate connections (for example, mobile phones and texting) are taken for granted. The changing ways that members of this generation can learn, communicate and entertain themselves may be the primary reasons behind the growing popularity of socially oriented technologies such as blogs, wikis, tagging and instant messaging. It is the first generation since the invention of television to have reduced its time watching television, due to the attention it devotes to other digital media, particularly the internet (Pedro, 2006).

New Millennial Learner (NML) consumption of digital media is less controllable than other older forms of media by parents or teachers. As the OECD’s project in the area has argued, there are clear implications here for traditional teaching and learning activities in schools with a need to move to more active individual participation (Pedro, 2006). New sets of personal and social values and attitudes may also be linked to these emerging practices. NMLs may be less willing to subscribe to the notion held by earlier generations that citizenship is a matter of duty and obligation (Bennett, 2007). NMLs favour loose networks of community action to address issues that reflect personal values using interactive information technologies such as blogging, gaming and MySpace (Bennett, 2007). This situation raises a challenge for schools as they seek to achieve their purposes. As an OECD expert in the area points out, will schools allow NMLs:

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\text{to more fully explore, experience and expand democracy, or will they continue to force them to try and fit into an earlier model that is ill suited to the networked societies of the digital age?}
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(Bennett, 2007, p. 8)

The demographic changes to the population will also mean that a different generation, by many accounts those born between 1961 and 1981, or ‘Generation X’, will move into the workforce positions of power and authority. Generation X is seen to be more practical, sceptical and non-institutional than previous generations (McREL, 2005). Research on the new generation of teachers who are entering the workforce in the 21st century by Moore Johnson (2004) refers to their sense of ‘higher purpose’ in the workplace, a characteristic more prominent than in those of later generations. Moore Johnson found that in comparison with previous generations of teachers the I are less accepting of top-down hierarchy and fixed channels of communication; less respectful of conventional organisations, generally more entrepreneurial than their predecessors, want a more varied experience, including outside the classroom, less likely to want to work alone, seek more frequent feedback about their performance; and are less intimidated by distinguishing themselves or taking charge and, more likely to expect (differentiated) salaries to reflect, in some fair way, their growth and success as teachers. It was also found that if systems and schools are not responsive to their talents and needs (for variety, responsibility and influence), they are likely to leave their school and the profession without concern.

As with advances in technology, several key questions need to be answered. Again, the answers to these questions are clearly set within the public purposes of education.

- How can we ensure increased engagement of the marginalised? It is worrying, for example, that deeper analysis of the first round of PISA (Programme for International Student Assessment) revealed that disparities among students in reading, mathematical and science literacy were wider in Australia than in many other nations, favouring girls over boys, urban over rural, high socioeconomic over low socioeconomic, and non-indigenous over Indigenous (Lokan, Greenwood & Creswell, 2001).

- How can we engender respect for the worth and dignity of individuals and their cultural traditions? For example, how can we understand and live harmoniously with ideological and religious differences? The ‘war on terror’ has not only changed the
way people travel but also the way some people of the world look at, and treat, people who look or act differently.

• How can we best develop attitudes and skills that will enable people to work in less hierarchical workplaces, to operate well with others, including in the technological networks of the digital age, and to be flexible and continually learning?

2.2.3 Globalisation

The world changes and Australia changes with it. Ideas about what exists elsewhere, what is possible, what is right and wrong, and about who does what to whom are no longer restricted to a geographic locality or a narrowly defined region. A global community is being constructed electronically and the availability of rapid and inexpensive transportation is reinforcing this condition on a personal basis. Increasingly there is nowhere to hide. Drinking cappuccino and Perrier water, eating sushi, or listening to American or British rock on an i-Pod while driving the Toyota over to McDonald’s dressed in our known-brand jeans are increasingly common worldwide activities. We are enthusiastically travelling the world and indulging ourselves in using international food, music and fashion.

As the global influence of certain countries increases, issues facing these countries will also be issues for all, including for Australians and their schools. For example, India is the world’s youngest country with 50 per cent of its people under the age of 25; by 2015 it will have 550 million teenagers. But India currently has 40 per cent of the world’s poor, including a third of the world’s malnourished children. It has the world’s largest population of people with HIV/AIDS (more than 5.7 million). It has mass unemployment from the high proportion of its population who were engaged in now redundant rural farming practices. It has a severe water crisis. With 17 per cent of the world’s population, India has only 4 per cent of the world’s fresh water. Global warming is shrinking glaciers in the Himalayas, placing this water and the rainfall patterns on which agriculture depends at risk (Kamdar, 2007). Global citizenship will mean that those in schools will need to increasingly be aware of and be part of the solution to such issues.

The current generation of school children, wherever they live, will be forced to succeed in a multi-cultural, multi-faith, and multi-lingual world. Schooling, curricula, assessment methods, learning programs, student achievement data will be international and interchangeable (Beare, 2007). This last phenomenon is clearly seen in the increasing decontextualised international comparisons of academic performance in limited areas of the curriculum through programs such as the Third International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) and Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA).

Globalisation has resulted in increased political intensification and simplification. Some suggest this intensification and simplification is a desperate attempt to retain control (Jones, 2006). On the other hand, and partly in response to globalisation, economic reform has sought to make us less dependent on states and governments and more dependent on economics, markets, prices and money – in brief, more directly dependent upon ourselves. Some researchers raise questions about such trends. For example, based on his research with 400 randomly selected middle Australians from five capital cities who shared their experiences of work, family and community, Pusey (2003) argues that these trends raise serious social, quality-of-life, family, public purpose issues. These are all issues which can impact on schools and their leaders.

The result of the commodification of everything has been an undermining of other more fundamental social resources for personal happiness, such as tension-free leisure, autonomy, effective personal communication, domestic felicity, good health, inter-generational relationships, meaningful work and friendships. Cooperation and collective action also have been undermined by, for example, competition and multi-skilling reduces interaction. Yet it is quality of life rather than material (money) income which people say matters most. (Pusey, 2003, p. 107)
2.2.4 Pressures on the environment

The pressures on the environment have been well documented. Factors such as the demand for fossil fuels and/or alternative sources of energy have led to a heightened awareness of threats to the environment and the need for responsible, decisive action to counter them. This awareness is resulting in a sharper focus on sustainability, the role of individuals within their communities and their impact on the environment (Margo et al., 2006).

The Australian Government’s Intergenerational Report (Costello, 2007) highlights the fact that the country faces significant economic and quality-of-life problems from global warming, water shortages, desertification and soil salination. As the then Treasurer emphasised at the launch of the report, ‘We must steward our environment between generations just as we steward finances.’ But time may be limited. As Beare (2007, pp. 37–38) indicates, ‘many commentators have pointed out [that] unless there is urgent action among the present generation on earth, we may be in the end-time of the planet, or of human civilization.’

Environmental forces raise questions for schools and their leaders. Again, these questions are clearly set within the public purposes of education and include:

- How can we learn quickly how to be responsible citizens of the globe, including being sustainable?
- What is the role of individuals within their community and their impact on, and stewardship of, the environment?
- How can we best encourage, develop and maintain sustainable schools and school leadership?

2.3 Implications of the forces for schools and their leaders

The four interrelated forces have at least three important implications for schools and their leaders: the need to make a choice between competing pressures created by the forces; the need to broaden ‘what counts’ as good schooling; and, ensuring that school processes are consistent with both these needs. It is argued that to achieve the best results in our schools the ‘what’ (products such as making choices and broadening what counts) and ‘how’ (school processes) need to be consistent with each other. This position is based on research that indicates how school leaders treat teachers is closely related to how teachers treat their students and, in turn, a broad range of student learning outcomes (Mulford, Silins & Leithwood, 2004).

2.3.1 Choosing between competing forces

Schools and their leaders need to choose between competing pressures generated by the forces. These pressures, which cut across the forces, are at one and the same time for constant change and continuity, dependence and independence, individualism and community, and homogeneity and heterogeneity. It is argued that for continued school success in the context of the forces just described, the choice must fall on the ‘public’ side of these responses, that is, continuity, independence, community, and heterogeneity (Mulford, 2003b).
Continuity or constant change

One element of recent times has been the constant change directed at schools: a stream of new movements, new programs and new directions. Unfortunately, some at all levels in education seem to be forever rushing to catch the next bandwagon that hits the scene. It is unfortunate because there is increasing evidence that many a school and school system and its students have been badly disillusioned by those selling the new movements (from ever-changing Ministers of Education and/or Departmental officials).

There is a view held by authors such as Peters (1987) that the main challenge in such a situation, a world of massive and constant change, is how to foster enough internal stability in people and the organisation in which they work and study in order to encourage the pursuit of change. Stability for change, moving ahead without losing our roots, is the challenge.

However, it is quite incorrect to assume that a school is effective only if it is undergoing change. Change may be in an inappropriate direction, for example, towards a facade of orderly purposefulness (Sergiovanni, 1990). Change may also involve the use of inappropriate measures of success, especially when they are merely procedural illusions of effectiveness (Meyer & Rowan, 1978). The difficulty of providing output measures by which education’s success can be measured has often led to the elevation in importance of ‘approved’ management processes. These processes include program planning, budgeting systems, school-based management, charters/partnership agreements, strategic plans, and so on. Such processes contribute an illusion of effectiveness and become desired outputs in themselves, thus deceiving outside observers and many of those in schools as well. Such deception should have no place in good education.

In a changing world, it might be more helpful to remember Noah’s principle: one survives not by predicting rain (or change) but by building arks. Amid uncertain, continually changing conditions, many schools are constructing arks comprising their collective capacity to learn, they are striving to become intelligent, or learning, organisations (Mulford, 2003c).3

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3 See the later section on communities of professional learners.
Dependence or independence

A second fundamental issue relates to the imbalance between the competing factors of dependence and independence with the current situation favouring dependence. This situation is most easily seen in the overdependence many of those in schools place on ‘leaders’. This view is frequently engendered by the overconfidence the ‘leaders’ have in their own abilities or importance.

Given the large number of recent Australian educational commissions, reviews, reports, position statements, and so on and the prominence of educational matters in the national media, there are a lot of people who want to tell those in schools what to do. This situation is unfortunate because many of those doing the telling do not seem to want to accept responsibility for their advice, are not around long enough to take responsibility for their directions and may even seek to prevent fair and open assessment of the changes they promulgate.

We cannot avoid change, indeed we may wish to seek, embrace and even thrive on it. Education is an integral part of our society and we must anticipate change as being one of the constants it will face. Whether these changes result in ‘Frankensteins’, or gentle, functional, collaborative and sustainable ‘butterflies’, depends largely on the response of those in schools. School leaders can continue to be on the receiving end, to be dependent, or they can choose to make a stand together, to be empowered, to be independent professionals, and to be leaders of democratic institutions proud to be serving their agreed purposes (see later sections).

Peter Hyman (2005), who left 10 Downing Street after many years as speech writer and advisor to the Prime Minister to work as an assistant to the headteacher at London’s Islington Green School, relates his reflection on the same point:

"Perhaps the biggest eye-opener for me on my journey has been how the approach I had been part of creating, to deal with 24-hour media and to demonstrate a decisive government, was entirely the wrong one for convincing frontline professionals, or indeed for ensuring successful delivery. Our approach to political strategy has been based on three things: momentum, conflict and novelty, whereas the frontline requires empowerment, partnership and consistency."

(Hyman, 2005, p. 384)

Individualism or community

It is said ours is a time when religious institutions no longer attract or have an impact on the young, families fall apart more often than ever before, some children are malnourished, drug addiction is a scourge and prime-time television programs are vacuous and educationally bankrupt. It is a time when advertisers and their clients have succeeded in not only rushing children through their developmental stages into a false sense of maturity but have also managed to link identity and status to brand names, and gang members; athletes, and narcissistic celebrities are the admired adolescent role models (Goodlad, 1994). It may be unreasonable to expect the schools to pick up the slack in such situations but if the family cannot and the school does not pick up the responsibility for our young, then who will? Who will counter, for example, the pressure inherent in much of our ‘modern’ society to act alone rather than with, or for, the community? We need to be reminded that change for the sake of change, including technological change, is not necessarily good; it must be tempered with wisdom, compassion and justice.

In the world described above, a skills crisis would indeed be bad enough but a values crisis would be devastating. The nine values for Australian schooling (care and compassion, doing your best, fair go, freedom, honesty and trustworthiness, integrity, respect, responsibility, and understanding, tolerance and inclusion – DEST, 2005) clearly need greater practical exposure. For example, turning back the tide of a ‘virtual’ existence, with its emphasis on individualism
and encouragement to dissociate oneself from an increasingly challenging world, is vital for our future survival. For, as Peck (1987) has reminded us, a community is a place where conflict can be resolved without physical or emotional bloodshed and with wisdom as well as grace. A community is a group that ‘fights gracefully’.

A generation that is unable to feel for others, incapable of creating the social trust that is so essential to maintain culture. And, as it is in the broader culture, so it is in schools. For example, it has been demonstrated that where teachers’ trust in principals is undermined by perceptions of principal co-option of top-down system change initiatives, especially when unsupported by teachers, it results in teacher alienation and feelings of disempowerment, which can result in teacher resistance (Bishop & Mulford, 1999). Engagement in decision-making processes creates a sense of ownership and responsibility in stakeholders and preparedness to compromise and act within the agreed parameters within the community.

**Homogeneity or heterogeneity**

In looking for common denominators in successful schools, one strong indicator is the encouragement offered to the staff and students to do something radical, to take the initiative, to take risks. If a system is too tight for this, there will be no search and no development, and without a developmental approach there can be no learning.

One lesson here is that reductionist approaches in education should not go unchallenged. Uniformity for schools and education systems in aims, in standards, and in methods of assessment is a complexity-reducing mechanism. While it may be far tidier administratively to have a single set of aims for all, a single curriculum for all, a single set of standards for all, and a single array of tests for all than it is to have locally developed approaches to school improvement, such homogeneity creates severe limitations to growth for schools.

Indeed research indicates that attempts to achieve homogeneity may backfire in terms of student attitudes to school. International research (OECD, 2004) shows, for example, that approximately a quarter of 15-year-old students across 32 countries ‘agree’ or ‘strongly agree’ that school is a place where they do not want to go. In countries such as Belgium, France and Hungary, where there is a high level of homogeneity in the education system, the proportion ranges from 35 to 42 per cent while in countries such as Denmark, Mexico, Portugal and Sweden, where there is less homogeneity, the figure is less than 20 per cent.

National researchers from the United Kingdom are:

> beginning to encounter students expressing doubts about the genuineness of their school’s interest in their progress and well-being as persons, as distinct from their contributions to their school’s league table position. [The result is that] contract replaces community as the bond of human association.

(Fielding, 1999, p. 286)

Another UK study found Year 10 and 11 students’ attitudes towards school to be uniformly negative. Most worrying in this study, however, was that teachers were beginning to be seen by their students as only representing other people’s wills as they sought out the best means to adapt to the homogenising requirements of academic achievement, results and inspection:

> every effort that a teacher makes to cajole the pupils into more work is interpreted as a sign of the teacher’s selfish insecurity ... all appears to be done for the sake of the external powers.

(Cullingford, 2001, p.7)

**2.3.2 Broadening what counts as good schooling**

The forces and pressures increasingly permeating our schools show that in order to achieve their expressed purposes, it is critical that schools and their leaders clarify what counts as ‘good’ schooling. From the earlier analysis, these purposes could be seen to include:
For individuals:

- developing identity and quality of life
- developing attitudes and skills for handling the speed of change, including change through digital media which promotes multitasking and simultaneously controlling different sources of information through ubiquitous and immediate connections
- making wise choices from and judgements about the amount of information available
- being better skilled, flexible and adaptable and to be able to continually learn.

For groups:

- developing identity and quality of interaction
- preventing the fragmentation of community, including through the building of social capital, families and ensuring equity of access
- being better at understanding, living and working with differences and others
- understanding how to harness the popularity of socially oriented technologies and digitally networked societies
- countering a move from evidence, the rule of law, justice, and intellectual detachment
- learning to be responsible citizens of the globe, including being sustainable.

Measures of successful student achievement are increasingly being seen as wider than the cognitive/academic/individual. More and more they involve the public purposes of education. Howard Gardner understood the need to broaden what counts for good schooling with his conceptualisation of multiple intelligences. His most recent work (Gardner, 2007) extends this understanding by defining the abilities that will be needed in times of vast change as his five ‘minds for the future’; that is, disciplinary, synthesising, creating, respectful and ethical minds.

In practice, however, what is most easily measured seems to ‘matter’ most, whether this be through international testing, such as for PISA and TIMMS in mathematics, reading and science literacies, national and state testing or examination regimes, national incentive/disincentive programs such as No Child Left Behind (NCLB) in USA that demand standardised testing in a limited number of areas, or local system and school reports. Unfortunately, research shows that the result can be a narrowing of the curriculum, an increase in testing and teaching to the tests, and disadvantage for certain groups in our society (Jennings & Rentner, 2006), especially minorities and the poor (Rothstein & Jacobsen, 2006).

What is the situation in Australia? What do we value most as the outcomes of our schools? The agreed goals for Australian schools (Adelaide Declaration, MCEETYA, 1999, emphasis added) state that “schooling should develop fully the talents and capacities of all students”. A more recent report on the future of schooling in Australia by the States and Territories (Federalist Paper 2, 2007) reasserts the importance of the Adelaide Declaration goals and their breadth. Included in the action plan of this report is also a commitment to

continue to work together to ... [explore] the possibility of a cycle of sample-based surveys of performance in areas not covered by the full cohort testing or international sample-based surveys in order to minimise any risk that the focus of assessment might limit the scope of curriculum in schools.

(Federalist Paper 2, 2007, p. 31)
Another source of information that helps us with an answer to the question of what do we value most as the outcomes of our schools is the research by Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ACCI) and the Business Council of Australia. These organisations have sought to discover what employers look for in workers in order to meet their current and future skills needs - skills such as communication, team work, problem-solving, initiative and enterprise, and planning and organising (DEST, 2002).

One might assume that an increasingly service-oriented economy the emphasis on social skills will become ever more important in determining success. However, the ACCI believes that a mismatch currently exists between what employers want and what they are getting from the education system. ACCI contend that

*Australia’s education and training systems must provide people with the knowledge, skills and attitudes they need to participate fully in Australian society – culturally, socially and in their employment.*

(ACCI, 2007, p. 18)

These multiple purposes of schools are common to many countries. One of the most comprehensive comparative studies in the area was undertaken by the National Foundation for Educational Research in England and Wales (1998) on behalf of the English School Curriculum and Assessment Authority. Its international review of 16 country curriculum and assessment frameworks found multiple aims with only two explicitly shared by all countries. These two aims were individual and social (citizenship/community/democracy) development.

Consistent with this argument to broaden what counts and is measured, especially to include public purposes such as social skills, is a range of impressive very high quality longitudinal research using data from the National Child Development Survey (Carneiro, et al, 2006; Margo & Dixon, 2006) and British Cohort Study (Feinstein, 2000; Margo & Dixon, 2006). This database continues to follow all children born in the United Kingdom in a single week in 1958 or 1970. These studies have found that measures of 7 to 11 year-olds social skills (as reported by their teachers) were excellent predictors of staying in school post-16, less trouble with police by age 16 and teenage motherhood, higher performance in higher education, and higher employment and salary levels (to age 42). The Institute for Public Policy Research (Margo & Dixon with Pearce & Reed, 2006, p. viii) concludes that in just over a decade, personal and social skills have become 33 times more important than at the start of the decade in determining relative life chances in terms of employment and wage levels but that “young people from less affluent backgrounds became less likely than their more fortunate peers to develop these skills”. Despite this evidence, these researchers go on to point out that national curriculum gives public purposes relatively little weight and that they are measured, recorded and reported inadequately by national tests and public examinations. As a result, public purposes, such as social skills, continue to be neglected by teachers and undervalued by pupils, their parents and the education systems at a time when in reality they matter more than ever. Cunha et al. (2005, p. 1) remind us that “remediation of inadequate early investments [in such areas of social skills] is difficult and very costly”.

From the results of their Tasmania research, Hogan and Donovan (2005) believe that not measuring the broader public outcomes of schooling will

*result in underestimates of the net contribution that schools make to individual wellbeing and aggregate social utility and permits a highly stratified and limited measure of school performance, academic achievement, to monopolise the ‘allocation’ of students into social division of labour.>*

(Hogan and Donovan, 2005, p. 100)

They conclude that this situation is neither sensible, nor efficient, nor defensible on social justice grounds. Similarly, in USA, Rothstein and Jacobsen (2006) conclude that the
gap between the preferences that respondents expressed in our surveys and the educational standards established through political processes reflects a widespread policy incoherence [and that the current] accountability system consisting almost exclusively of standardized tests is a travesty and betrayal of our historic commitments.

(Rothstein & Jacobsen, 2006, p. 271)

2.3.3 The ways schools are organised and run

The position taken in this chapter is that the way schools are organised and run needs to be consistent with the pressures created by the forces on schools and the need to broaden outcomes. Schools and their leaders will need to move from the bureaucratic and mechanistic to organic living systems, from thin to deep democracy, from mass education to personalisation through participation, and from hierarchies to networks.

From bureaucratic, mechanistic to organic, living systems

Moving from existing ways of operating may be difficult. For example, research on the OECD scenarios for future schools (Mulford, 2008) shows that 96 per cent of Australian educational leaders believed powerful bureaucratic systems would continue to have a role in schooling organisation within the next decade. This was followed by 63 per cent support for learning organisations, 57 per cent for social centres, 35 per cent the market scenario, 31 per cent for a meltdown, and only 20 per cent for ICT networks. In terms of desirability 78 per cent of the Australian educational leaders favoured learning organisations, 75 per cent social centres, 29 per cent ICT networks, 22 per cent markets, and 22 per cent meltdown. A mere 8 per cent thought the bureaucracy scenario was desirable.

Of particular note is the huge gap between the likelihood (very high) and desirability (very low) of the bureaucratic system scenario. Overcoming this gap, that is, moving from what might be perceived as a dependence on, or feelings about the inevitability of, powerfully bureaucratic systems and schools to scenarios that are more reflective of desired social centres and learning organisations, will be a major challenge.

Wheatley (2005) employs two competing metaphors – ‘organisations as machines’ and ‘organisations as living systems’ – as explanations for both organisations and leadership that differ radically in their functioning and outcomes. The ‘machine’ metaphor encourages a view of organisation as a fixed structure of some sort, a structure consisting of parts that need to be ‘oiled’ if they are to function together smoothly. From this view, organisations require effortful monitoring, coordination and direction by someone, typically a ‘leader’.

Such leadership, aiming to increase employees’ certainty about their work (and increase the school’s level of accountability to government and the public) is mostly transactional. This means that, in the case of school organisations, teachers are assumed to be motivated by the promise of extrinsic, positive rewards such as money and status and by extrinsic, negative impacts such as school reconstitution and public shaming through the publication of league tables.

Transactional, command and control forms of leadership on the part of principals further manifests itself in the close supervision of teachers, specification of ‘the one best model of instruction’ which all teachers must use, centralised decisions about how time in the classroom is to be used, together with very long lists of curriculum standards or expectations which teachers are required to cover with students. Teachers are allowed little autonomy over their work in classrooms, their voices are, at best, heard weakly in school-wide decision making and yet they are held almost entirely accountable for student achievement (Day & Leithwood, 2007).

Conversely the organic, or ‘living systems’ metaphor encourages a view of organisation as a process, one of constant adaptation, growth and becoming that occurs naturally and
inevitably in response to a strong desire for learning and survival. Descriptions of organisation-as-living-system bear a strong resemblance to accounts of organisational learning in schools (Silins & Mulford, 2002a; Mulford, Silins & Leithwood, 2004), to descriptions of work in professional learning communities (Stoll et al., 2006) and the OECD (2001b, 2006) scenarios for future schools preferred by Australian educational leaders, social centres and learning organisations.

Research arising from an ongoing eight-country research project, the International Successful School Principals’ Project, and published in the *Journal of Educational Administration* (43(6) 2005) and in Day & Leithwood, (2007) strongly suggests that successful principals thought of their organisations as living systems, not machines:

*One of the more remarkable results of our research was that even in the highly accountable policy contexts intended to deal with such uncertainty, successful principals assiduously avoided a command and control form of leadership. ... Our successful principals, on the whole, appeared to hold a deep, if tacit, conception of their organisations as organic, living systems, rather than as machines. ... If the organisation needed ‘oiling’, it was increased mutual trust, not more policy and regulation that was applied.*

(Day & Leithwood (Eds.), 2007, p. 1).

**From thin to deep democracy**

Furman and Shields (2003) argue that there is a need to move our schools from ‘thin’ conceptions of democracy, based on the values of classical liberalism and on its concern with the right of the individual to pursue his or her self-interest plus the resolution of conflict through ‘democratic’ majority voting, to a notion of ‘deep’ democracy. Dewey (in Furman & Shields, 2003) saw ‘deep’ democracy as involving respect for the worth and dignity of individuals and their cultural traditions, reverence for, and the proactive facilitation of, free and open inquiry and critique, recognition of interdependence in working for the common good, the responsibility of individuals to participate in free and open inquiry and the importance of collective choices and actions in the interest of the common good.

Furman and Shields (2003) state that ‘deep’ democracy needs to be *practised* in schools. However, as a consequence of risk of chaos and loss of control from the forces on schools, the typical pattern they perceive is that students:

*are expected to conform to hierarchically imposed decisions about what they study and teach and when, what the outcomes of instruction should be, how to behave and talk, and even how they look ... [In fact,] learning democracy may be one of the least experiential aspects of K–12 curricula.*

(Furman & Shields, 2003, p. 10)

The results of a recent analysis of school principal training in Tasmania (Mulford, 2004) that compared policy documents with the actual experience of the Tasmanian Principals’ Institute (Banfield, 2005) questions whether the same could also be said about the adults in schools within bureaucratically designed systems. ‘Deep’ democracy needs to be practised by them, but according to studies by practicing school principals such as Banfield (2005) and Bennett (2002) it may be the least experienced aspect of their working world, especially when it comes to their own professional development.

**From mass education to personalisation through participation**

A major debate currently taking place in the United Kingdom about the future shape of public services picks up on the confused contextual situation for those in schools. This debate is pitched into the chasm between the way public institutions work and how users experience them. For example, in the education sector it has been argued that efficiency measures based on new public management as reflected in:
Targets, league tables and inspection regimes may have improved aspects of performance in public services. Yet the cost has been to make public services seem more machine-like, more like a production line producing standardised goods. [And, I would add, increasingly create dependence on the system.] ... It is ... clear that the State cannot deliver collective solutions from on high. It is too cumbersome and distant. The State can only help create public goods – such as better education – by encouraging them to emerge from within society. That is, to shift from a model in which the centre controls, initiates, plans, instructs and serves, to one in which the centre governs through promoting collaborative, critical and honest self-evaluation and self-improvement.

(Leadbeater, 2004a, pp. 81, 83 & 90)

Public services, such as schools and school systems, can be improved by focusing on what is called ‘personalisation through participation’ (Leadbeater, 2004a, 2004b, & 2005; NCSL, 2005c). Personalised public service is seen as having four different meanings:

- providing people with a more customer-friendly interface with existing services
- giving users more say in navigating their way through services once they have access to them
- giving users more direct say over how the money is spent
- seeing users not just as consumers but co-designers and co-producers of a service.

Across these four meanings, dependent users become consumers and commissioners then co-designers, co-producers and solution assemblers. In schools, learners (students and staff) become actively and continually engaged in setting their own targets, devising their own learning plan and goals, and choosing from among a range of different ways to learn. Additionally, across the four meanings, the professional’s role changes from providing solutions for dependent users to designing environments, networks and platforms through which people can together devise their own independent and interdependent solutions.

The ‘pay-off’ of personalisation through participation is believed to be increased levels of knowledge, participation, commitment, responsibility and productivity. Personalisation can be seen to be both a process and an outcome of effective public organisations, including schools.

**From hierarchy to networks**

Leadbeater (2005) believes that personalised learning will only become reality when schools become much more networked, collaborating not only with other schools, but with families, community groups and other public agencies. Arguably one of the best funded and continuous school networks is the Network Learning Group (NLG) with its hub at the UK’s National College for School Leadership (NCSL). Its research findings about the advantages of networks over traditional hierarchically designed organisations can be summarised as follows:

- they engender greater degrees of sharing, diversity, flexibility, creativity and risk-taking; a broadening of teacher expertise;
- more learning opportunities available to pupils; and
- they result in improved teaching and student attainment (NCSL, 2005b).

The NLG research indicates that while there is no blueprint for an effective network, it is possible to identify the factors that successful networks have in common. They:

- design the network around a compelling idea or aspirational purpose and an appropriate form and structure
- focus on pupil learning
• create new opportunities for adult learning
• plan and have dedicated leadership and management.

Leadbeater warns, however, that the collaboration needed for effective networks:

can be held back by regulation, inspection and funding regimes that encourage schools to think of themselves as autonomous, stand alone units.

Leadbeater (2005, p. 22)

Rusch (2005) concludes that networks cannot be controlled by a formal system. She questions the role of the system in effective school networks, describing what is likely to be required by networks, as opposed to what is required by the system, as ‘competing institutional scripts’. She characterises some of the differences as follows: structures are malleable in networks but fixed and hierarchical systems; conflict is open and valued in networks while it tends to be hidden and feared in systems; communication is open and unbounded in networks but controlled and closed in systems; and, leadership is fluid in networks while it is hierarchical and assigned in systems.

2.4 Social capital and communities of professional learners

Two linked concepts underpin the implementation advice being offered in this chapter, social capital and communities of professional learners. These two concepts, which are closely related to the public purposes and practices of education, are examined in some depth in the remainder of this chapter.

Knowing the definition of social capital will provide a helpful start, but it does little to assist leaders in dealing with the challenges in building social capital in schools. In addressing this task, the first part of this section concentrates on the three different forms of social capital (bonding, bridging, linking), the importance of each and a way forward in using them. This way forward involves those in schools seeing their task as developmental, starting with the building of social capital in communities of professional learners (the second part of this section).

2.4.1 Social capital

Social capital as an idea has enjoyed a remarkable rise to prominence in recent decades. By treating social relationships as a form of capital, it proposes that they are a resource, which people can then draw on to achieve their goals. It also serves alongside other forms of capital (such as economic, human, cultural, identity and intellectual) as one possible resource and accepted contributor to our individual, community and national well-being. International bodies such as UNESCO, OECD and the World Bank have engaged in extensive conceptual, empirical and policy related work in the area. The World Bank (Grootaert, et al., 2004, p. 3) concluded that social capital: “is most frequently defined in terms of the groups, networks, norms, and trust that people have available to them for productive purposes”. As well as this generally accepted definition, common distinctions are made among ‘bonding’, ‘bridging’ and ‘linking’ forms of social capital.

**Bonding social capital: Within schools**

Bonding social capital is interpreted as social capital that occurs among work colleagues within schools. It is the most developed area in the research literature. Being a valued part of a group is important for all those in schools. A review of research that examines the importance and challenges of being a valued part of a school (bonding social capital) for students and teachers follows.

Building upon the seminal work of Coleman (1994) on educational attainment, cognitive development and self-identity in American ghettos, the OECD (2004) has concluded that a general sense of belonging at school is so important for student educational, economic, social, health, and well-being success that it should be treated as equally important an outcome of
schooling as academic results. Recent research supports this argument. In the rare large-scale longitudinal study reported earlier, Feinstein (2000) found that students’ peer relations, locus of control and self-concept were related to later life successes, such as employment and earnings. At a more general level, Field (2005) found that people’s social relationships play a vital role in their capacity for learning.

Research also links within-school bonding social capital to student academic results (OECD, 2004; Beatty & Brew, 2005; Hogan & Donovan, 2005; Sweetland & Hoy, 2000; Stoll, Fink & Earl, 2003; Marks & Louis, 1997; Somech, 2002; Mawhinney, Hass & Wood, 2005; Ross, Hegaboam & Gray et al., 2004; Mulford, 2003a; Mulford, 2007; Mulford, Silins & Leithwood, 2004; Silins & Mulford, 2002). This research makes clear how important groups, networks, norms, and trust (in other words, bonding social capital) can be, not only for student feelings of self-worth, day-by-day enjoyment of school and academic results, but also for their later life chances. Bandura (1983) and Goddard, Hoy and Woolfolk Hoy (2004) have even demonstrated that the effects of collective teacher efficacy on student achievement were stronger than the direct link between SES and student achievement. These are powerful findings that contradict conventional ‘wisdom’ in our field.

Mawhinney, Hass and Wood (2005) sought to better understand how, under the pressures of accountability, school districts in the USA are undertaking research to support their development of strategic actions to foster organisational learning in schools. The researchers also examined districts’ interest in the relationships among perceived conditions of professional learning, teachers’ collective efficacy beliefs and student achievement. The researchers found collective efficacy, or group development, preceded professional learning communities. The finding clearly reinforces the importance of group development, or bonding social capital, as a first step in effective schools and their leadership no matter what the contextual pressures.

Mulford, Silins and Leithwood (2004) see bonding of social capital in schools as developmental. This is seen in their Australian research on organisational learning, which found this concept consisted of four factors, three of which were developmental – a trusting and collaborative climate, followed by a shared and monitored mission and, finally, taking initiatives and risks. The fourth factor was ongoing, relevant (that is, linked to the developmental stages) professional development. The developmental nature of bonding social capital is also seen in their conceptualisation of staff development. At the first or ‘forming stage’, staff are polite, they avoid conflict, and they are concerned about being accepted or rejected. At the second stage, ‘storming’, staff become involved in conflict because of concern about status, power and organisation. The third stage, ‘norming’, sees more cohesion between staff, as there is more affection, open-mindedness and a willingness to share. However, pressures to conform to the group (known as ‘groupthink’) may detract from the task at hand. Next comes the ‘performing’ stage, or ‘work’ stage. It is characterised by an increase in task orientation and an open exchange of feedback. The fourth stage is known as ‘transforming’. This stage represents a refinement of the performing stage. It indicates that the staff does not just continue performing the same tasks well, that it learns from feedback about those tasks and how they are undertaking them and, if necessary, changes the tasks and/or the methods of achieving them.

Unfortunately, if left to their own devices, the staff may not progress beyond the earlier, less productive, stages of ‘forming’, ‘storming’, and ‘norming’. The effective school leader clearly needs the skills to assist them to move through to the more effective later stages of ‘performing’, and especially ‘transforming’. Understanding and being able to act in a targeted way on the stages of staff development can help school leaders better understand the intricacies involved in moving a school, or part of a school, from where it is now to becoming truly effective and meeting its full potential.
**Bridging social capital: Among and between schools**

Bridging social capital is social capital that occurs among and between schools. This is a recent but growing area in the research literature, especially in the area of networking (see the previous subsection 3.3.4).

As was pointed out earlier, Leadbeater (2005) argues that personalised learning will only become reality when schools become much more networked but that collaboration can be held back by regulation, inspection and system funding regimes. In support, Hopkins (NCSL, 2005b) argues that:

> traditional levers for improvement, such as tests and targets, are reaching the limits of their potential and the next phase of education reform will require new ways of delivering ‘excellence and equity [and that] networks [among schools] are perhaps the best way we have at present to create and support this expectation.

(Hopkins, NCSL, 2005b, p. 7)

Reinforcing Rusch’s (2005) findings in education (see section 3.3.4), a worldwide research study summarising the findings from productive private sector network arrangements (Kanter, 1994) identified three fundamental aspects of successful network alliances as benefits for all partners, collaboration and lack of control by the formal system.

Holmes and Johns-Shepherd (NCSL, 2005b) found that in the early days of school network development courting and aligning activities dominated and then, as the network emerged, the focus shifted to aligning and connecting. Courting involved getting people on board, building consensus and trust around a compelling idea and securing commitment. Aligning involved using the established trust to set parameters for collaboration, establishing working groups and securing resources. Connecting involved creating a critical mass of enthusiasts to participate fully in the network. Modelling some of the processes, uniting the senior leaders around the purposes, and encouraging low-risk created quick successes at the start.

Such research underscores the importance of bridging social capital. But, again, the advice is that the social capital constitutes the starting point, a necessary but insufficient condition for effective networks. There is a need to use it to develop an agreed set of priorities, a plan and a structure to sustain the network.

**Linking social capital: Between the school and its community**

Linking social capital is that occurring between a school and its community. While there is a long research tradition in the school–community area, it tends to be unidirectional, concentrating on what the community can do for the school, rather than examining and reflecting on its multidirectional character.

Schools play a vital role in strengthening linkages within their communities by providing opportunities for interaction and networking, which, in turn, contribute to the community’s well-being and social cohesion. The close links between the survival and development of schools and their communities have been demonstrated by a number of researchers. One example provided as evidence for this relates to the way in which many rural communities have failed to remain viable after losing their school (Jolly & Deloney, 1996).

One Australian research project (Kilpatrick et al., 2001), conducted for the Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation, confirms this relationship between school and community and its importance to both parties. The project examined through case studies the extent and nature of the contribution of rural schools to their communities’ development beyond offering traditional forms of education to its young people in five best-practice schools in diverse rural communities across Australia. It also examined the ways in which leadership influenced the process. Rural school community partnerships were found to deliver a variety of positive outcomes for youth and for the community, including the provision of training that met both student and community needs, an improved school and community
retention, plus positive environmental, cultural, recreational and economic outcomes. While these tangible outcomes are important to the sustainability of many small rural communities, the potentially more valuable outcome from the partnerships was the increase in individual and community capacity to influence their own futures.

Effective leadership for school–community partnerships was found to be a collective process consisting of five stages: trigger, initiation, development, maintenance and sustainability. Additionally, Kilpatrick et al. (2001) identified 12 indicators of effective school community partnerships. Underscoring all these indicators was the importance of collective learning activities including teamwork and network building.

The research evidence reviewed in this subsection has been clear in its strong support for all three forms of social capital. The outcomes are impressive, not least of which are improved student engagement and academic performance, plus improved later life chances and an increased capacity of individuals and communities to influence their own futures.

2.4.2 Communities of professional learners

A message arising from the above research is that school staffs must learn how to lose time in order to gain time. By this is meant that an awareness of, and skill development in group and organisational processes is a first step in any effective change, especially in better achieving the public purposes of education. Instead of others trying to insert something new into a school’s (or community’s) culture, the school, schools or school and community, and especially the leadership, should first analyse what it already has. They should first spend time trying to help that culture develop an awareness of and responsiveness to itself (Scribner, Hager & Warne, 2002).

Development can be seen throughout much of the research reviewed and is summarised in Figure 2.1. This research shows:

- teacher collective efficacy preceding communities of professional learners as well as the forming, storming, norming, performing, transforming stages of staff development (see column 2 in Figure 1)
- the trusting and collaborative climate, shared and monitored mission and taking initiatives and risks stages of organisational learning (column 3)
- the establishment, emerging, mature and disengagement or renewal stages of school networks (column 4)
- the trigger, initiation, development, maintenance, and sustainability stages of school community partnerships (column 5).

In column 1 of Figure 2.1, the factors that make up school leader transformational leadership are also conceptualised as sequential with individual support, culture (including promoting an atmosphere of caring and trust among staff and setting the tone for respectful interaction with students) and structure (including participative decision making, delegation and distributive leadership) preceding vision and goals and performance expectations which, in turn, precede intellectual stimulation (Mulford, 2007d).

In brief, the position taken identifies three major, sequential and embedded elements in successful school and leader responses to the forces and pressures that currently surround them. It takes the two elements in the definition of social capital, ‘groups, networks, norms and trust’ and ‘for productive purposes’, and extends them to include a third element of ‘learning’.

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4 As will be seen, the sequence of words/concepts is important.
Figure 2.1: Developing communities of professional learners

Developmental stages

Summary of research evidence in five areas with links to the three developmental stages and three types of social capital

I. COMMUNITY

II. COMMUNITY OF PROFESSIONALS

III. COMMUNITY OF PROFESSIONAL LEARNERS

How people are treated i.e. trust, communication, collaboration

Shared and monitored mission & practice

Capacity to learn/change

1. Leadership
2. Staff development
3. Organ’l learning
4. Networks among schools
5. School community partnerships

Individual support
Culture
Structure

Vision/goals
Performance expectations

Intellectual stimulation

Forming/Storming/Norming

Performing/Dorming

Transforming

Establishment (courting and aligning)

Emerging (aligning and connecting)

Mature (embedding)

Disengagement or renewal (refocusing)

Sustainability (review and renew)

BONDING SOCIAL CAPITAL

BRIDGING SOCIAL CAPITAL

LINKING SOCIAL CAPITAL

Trusting and collaborative climate

Taking initiatives and risks

Trigger initiation (informal)

Development (formal)

Trigger initiation (informal)

Development (formal)

Trusting and collaborative climate

Taking initiatives and risks

Trigger initiation (informal)

Development (formal)
The first element in the sequence deals with community (see oval/egg 1 in the nested, ‘eggs-within-eggs’ diagram on the left of the Figure 2.1 with the research evidence on the right hand side colour coded to each element/oval). It centres on how people are communicated with and treated. Success is more likely where people act rather than are always reacting, are empowered, involved in decision making through a transparent, facilitative and supportive structure, and are trusted, respected, encouraged and valued. It is a waste of time moving to the second element until such a community is established.

The second element concerns a community of professionals. A community of professionals involves shared norms and values including valuing differences and diversity, a focus on implementation and continuous enhancement of quality learning for all students, deprivatisation of practice, collaboration, and critical reflective dialogue, especially that based on performance data (oval II).

But a community of professionals can be static, continuing to do the same or similar thing well. The final element relates to the presence of a capacity for change, learning and innovation, in other words, a community of professional learners (oval III).

Each element of a CPL, and each transition between them, can be facilitated by appropriate leadership and ongoing, optimistic, caring, nurturing professional development programs (the ‘+PD’ in each of the stages). Also, each element is a prerequisite for the other – as the diagram implies, they are embedded within each other with only the emphasis changing. For example, when learning is occurring, there is still a need to revisit the social community and the professional community, especially where there has been a change of personnel and/or a new governmental direction has been announced.

Using this analysis of bonding, bridging and linking social capital to understand the importance of, challenges to and developmental nature of communities of professional learners can also assist in better translating the forces impacting upon Australian schools into policy and practice. For example, it can help us:

- understand better and be able to take action on the intricacies involved in moving a school, or part of a school, from where it is now to becoming truly a place of ongoing excellence and equity serving individual and public purposes without those in schools being ‘bowled over’ by the forces and pressures for change that surround them
- target appropriate interventions to ensure more effective progression through the stages. In targeting interventions recognition will need to be given to the fact that it is a journey and that actions at one stage may be inappropriate, or even counterproductive, at another stage
- support the position that a school will need to be evaluated differently depending on the stage it has reached.

2.5 Conclusion

Changing schools and school systems so they become communities of professional learners serving public as well as private purposes of education will not be for the faint of heart. It will require many schools and their leaders to radically rethink how they operate. But unless these changes are made there would seem little hope of schools meeting, let alone prospering under, the forces and pressures that currently engulf them.

Clearly there is a need to achieve better balances in our world, including between learning what the political and bureaucratic systems require of individual leaders and their schools (see the next Chapter) and what practising professionals require of themselves, their colleagues
and their schools see Chapter 5). However, on the basis of the research provided in this chapter, this balance can best be achieved by groups of educational leaders, or professional collectives and alliances, setting, negotiating and delivering their own agendas. After all, as the evidence reported in this chapter points out and Lecomte and Smillie, (2004) confirm, participation in context, organisation and leadership, including policy making, not only enhances efficiency in implementation but also can contribute to public purposes and processes, that is to the creation of more pluralistic and democratic educational systems and societies.

2.6 References


Chapter 3: Educational priorities in Tasmania: Policy documents and policy maker interviews

3.1 Introduction
Given the forces impacting upon Australian schools and their implications for schools and their leaders, what are Tasmania’s educational priorities? In seeking an answer to this question, this chapter examines and contrasts recent Tasmanian educational policy documents and interviews.

3.2 Policy Documents

3.2.1 Introduction
Tasmania has a number of recent policy documents with implications for the public purposes of education and their enactment. These documents start at the state level with Tasmania Together and then move to the educational level with, chronologically, Learning Together and the Essential Learnings, Supportive School Communities, Essential Learnings for All, the Tasmanian Curriculum, and Reporting to Parents. In what follows, each policy document is briefly outlined. More detailed summaries can be found at the web sites provided and the next chapter in the section (4.2) on the changing context within which schools operate in Tasmania. We conclude with a summary of the implications of recent Tasmanian government or educational policy documents for the public purposes of education and their enactment.

3.2.2 Tasmania Together
A 20 year social, environmental and economic plan for Tasmania has provided the overarching policy framework for Tasmanian education since the year 2000 (www.tasmaniatogether.tas.gov.au). The vision developed during the Tasmania Together process was:

Tasmania is an island community, unique for its natural and cultural environment, where people enjoy a prosperous lifestyle based on quality, creativity and opportunity.

Director of the Tasmania Together Progress Board, Phillip Hoysted, said that the Progress Board recognised the value of involving the next generation of young people in developing and working on our goals for the future.

“Students are interested in the world they live in – and are concerned about issues like education standards, healthy living and the environment.”

“Our students are our future citizens and leaders, and it’s important that they learn about their community and become involved in civic processes and citizenship activity.”

Public purposes of Tasmanian education as identified in Tasmania Together include providing:

- High quality education and training for lifelong learning and a skilled workforce
- Support for preschool children to give them an early start
- Improved levels of community literacy
• Recognition of, promote share and celebrate aboriginal culture and heritage
• Opportunities for all Tasmanians (students) to participate in decisions that affect their lives
• Opportunities for young people to participate in decision-making processes.

Goal 3 Standard 2, Support improved levels of community literacy, looks at the performance of students in years three, five and seven in reading, writing and numeracy and compares student performance against national literacy and numeracy benchmarks. Tasmania Together considers literacy and numeracy to be fundamental to all areas of learning and that the capacity to learn and to continue to be involved in learning throughout life depends upon proficiency in literacy.

3.2.3 Learning Together and the Essential Learnings

In mid 1999 a separate, but complementary process to Tasmania Together was begun by the Minister for Education following which future directions for education in Tasmania were identified and the Essential Learnings Curriculum (ELs) developed and implemented (http://www.education.tas.gov.au/school/educators/curriculum/el_standards/essential_learning.pdf). The Values and Purposes expressed in the ELs documentation embody many public purposes of education.

Public purposes of education as identified in Learning Together include the provision of:

• Services that ensure all Tasmanians develop the knowledge, skills and confidence they need
• Opportunities that enable people to work effectively and participate in society
• Safe and inclusive learning environments that encourage and support participation in learning throughout life
• Access to global and local information resources so that everyone has the opportunity to participate in, and contribute to, a healthy democracy and a prosperous society
• A guiding set of core values; connectedness, resilience, achievement, creativity, integrity, responsibility and equity
• Shared purposes of ensuring students and children are; Learning to relate, participate and care, Learning to live full and healthy lives, Learning to create purposeful futures, Learning to act ethically, Learning to learn and Learning to think, know and understand.
• Essential Learnings that include a focus on the key elements of:
  o Thinking (inquiry and reflective thinking),
  o Communicating (being literate, being numerate, being information literate and being arts literate),
  o Personal futures (building and maintaining identity and relationships, maintaining wellbeing, being ethical, creating and pursuing goals)
  o Social responsibility (building social capital, valuing diversity,
  o Acting democratically,
  o Understanding the past and creating shared futures), and
  o World futures (investigating the natural and constructed world, understanding systems, designing and evaluating technological solutions and creating sustainable futures).

3.2.4 Supportive School Communities Framework 2003-2007

A Supportive School Communities Policy Framework 2003-2007 was developed to refocus the Supportive School Environments policy that was released in 1989. While the initial intention had been to develop a revised policy, it became clear that a framework was needed to bring together the numerous related departmental policies, statements, guidelines, programs
and services which had been developed in the intervening years (www.education.tas.gov.au/school/educators/support/supportiveschoolcommunities/policieslegislation). Specific goals to which schools needed to respond were:

_Tasmania Together_

**Goal 2** Have a community where people feel safe and are safe in all aspects of their lives.

**Goal 4** Create a culture that encourages people to learn and develop new skills, including life skills, throughout their lives.

**Goal 5** Develop an approach to health and wellbeing that focuses on preventing poor health and encouraging healthy lifestyles.

**Goal 9** Foster an inclusive society that acknowledges and respects our multicultural heritage, values diversity and treats everyone with compassion and respect.

_Learning Together_

**Goal 3.1** Ensure that all childcare services, schools and training institutions are supportive and safe places.

**Goal 3.2** Ensure that students who are “at risk” have the opportunity to participate.

**Goal 3.4** Ensure that all learning organisations successfully include all students.

The public purposes of Tasmanian education as identified in _The Supportive School Communities Policy Framework 2003-2007_ include being:

- Responsive to the needs and aspirations of the school community
- Supportive and inclusive of the diverse groups that comprise the community
- A central component in the continuum of provision for lifelong learning that includes childcare at one end and a range of adult and community education provisions at the other
- Engaged in the quest for continual improvement of outcomes for students
- Key contributors to social and community strength, through access, participation and achievement in order to maximise the learning outcomes of all students.

**3.2.5 Essential Learnings for All**

A Review of Services for Students with Special and/or Additional Education Needs (Essential Learnings for All or Atelier Report; 2004 - http://www.education.tas.gov.au/school/educators/curriculum/elscurriculum) endorses the Tasmanian Education Department’s strong commitment to inclusion as a core value of public education. The report was implemented at the beginning of 2005, resulting in major changes to the way schools operated. Schools were grouped into 27 clusters with resources to support the inclusion of students, previously dispersed through the five Education District student support centres, now being allocated by principals within each cluster of schools.

Public purposes of Tasmanian education as identified in _Essential Learnings for All_ included providing:

- A strong social justice and equity component as its values base
- A strong commitment to inclusion as a core value
- Equity of access to ensure students with special and/or additional needs have
- Resources for inclusive learning approaches and programs.
The Tasmanian Department of Education mandated the reporting of student progress in the ELs during 2005 despite the varying levels of teacher confidence in their understanding of and capacity to implement the ELs curriculum. When coupled with the inappropriate use of language by the Department of Education in student reports and the pressure applied by the Federal Minister for Education, through the media, on Tasmania to conform to Federal requirements, the future of ELs was placed at risk.

### 3.2.6 The Tasmanian Curriculum

In fact the Tasmanian Curriculum replaced the ELs curriculum following a great deal of controversy over ELs (see the next chapter) and the appointment of a new Tasmanian Minister for Education after the 2006 State elections. The values, purposes and goals of the Tasmanian Curriculum support the vision expressed in *Tasmania Together* ([http://www.education.tas.gov.au/school/educators/curriculum/tasmanian-curriculum](http://www.education.tas.gov.au/school/educators/curriculum/tasmanian-curriculum)). The following chart indicates how the goals and indicators of *Tasmania Together* can be linked to the Tasmanian Curriculum.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tasmanian Curriculum Area</th>
<th>Tasmania Together: Examples of relevant Goals / Headline Indicators</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>English - Literacy</td>
<td>Goal 3: High quality education and training for lifelong learning and a skilled workforce: <em>Literacy and Numeracy</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mathematics - Numeracy</td>
<td>Goal 3: High quality education and training for lifelong learning and a skilled workforce: <em>Literacy and Numeracy</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health and Wellbeing</td>
<td>Goal 4: Active, healthy Tasmanians with access to quality and affordable health care services: <em>Avoidable Mortality</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Society and History</td>
<td>Goal 8: Open and accountable government that listens and plans for a shared future: <em>Local Government Elections</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Science</td>
<td>Goal 12: Sustainable management of our natural resources: <em>Greenhouse Gas Emissions</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vocational and Applied Learning</td>
<td>Goal 9: Increased work opportunities for all Tasmanians: <em>Workforce Participation Rate</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Arts</td>
<td>Goal 6: Dynamic, creative and internationally recognised arts community and culture: <em>attendance at cultural heritage sites</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Accompanying the change from ELs to the *Tasmania Curriculum* was another restructuring of the Department of Education into four Learning Communities and the abandonment of the clusters of schools. The decentralised distribution of Department of Education resources to schools would now be made by each Learning Community.

### 3.2.7 Reporting to Parents

One of the factors contributing to the demise of ELs related to reporting to parents. The new Minister for Education set up a taskforce in this area. The *Reporting to Parents* Taskforce reported on 30 November 2006 ([www.education.tas.gov.au/dept/about/visions/Reportingtoparents](http://www.education.tas.gov.au/dept/about/visions/Reportingtoparents)). In their concluding remarks they stated that they believed that more attention to communicating with parents would bring more support from them. While recognising the demands on teachers, the Taskforce thought that the rewards for children, schools, teachers and parents are worth the investment (of time and effort spent by teachers on the reporting process). An analysis of the report prepared by the Taskforce, with particular focus on the student attributes to be reported upon, showed that the following public purposes of education were evident or implied:

- Developing appropriate work-habits, attitudes, effort and behaviour;
• Engaging in consistent and reliable assessment standards across the state system;
• Tracking a child/student’s progress from year to year and recording this in annual reports to parents;
• Advising parents/guardians on how the progress of their child might be improved.

3.2.8 Summary and Conclusion

In summary, the public purposes of Tasmanian education, as identified in recent Department of Education policy documents, includes the provision of:

Essential learnings that include a focus on the key elements of:

- Thinking (inquiry and reflective thinking)
- Communicating (being literate, being numerate, being information literate and being arts literate)
- Personal futures (building and maintaining identity and relationships, maintaining wellbeing, being ethical, creating and pursuing goals)
- Social responsibility (building social capital, valuing diversity)
- Acting democratically
- Understanding the past and creating shared futures
- World futures (investigating the natural and constructed world, understanding systems, designing and evaluating technological solutions and creating sustainable futures)

that have:

- A guiding set of core values: connectedness, resilience, achievement, creativity, integrity, responsibility and equity
- Shared purposes to ensure students and children are learning to: relate, participate and care; live full and healthy lives; create purposeful futures; act ethically; learn and think, know and understand

and are:

- Responsive to the needs and aspirations of the school community
- Supportive and inclusive of the diverse groups that comprise the community
- A provider of lifelong learning that includes childcare at one end and a range of adult and community education provisions at the other
- Engaged in the quest for continual improvement of outcomes for students
- Key contributors to social and community strength, through access, participation and achievement in order to maximise the learning outcomes of all students
- A central component in the continuum of provision for lifelong learning that includes childcare at one end and a range of adult and community education provisions at the other

whilst:

- Providing safe and inclusive learning environments that encourage and support participation in learning through out life
- Initiating support for preschool children to give them an early start
- Giving access to global and local information resources so that everyone has the opportunity to participate in, and contribute to, a healthy democracy and a prosperous society
- Recognising, promoting, sharing and celebrating aboriginal culture and heritage
- Developing appropriate work-habits, attitudes, effort and behaviour
- Providing opportunities for the participation of young people in decision-making
- Enabling people to work effectively and participate in society
• Engaging in consistent and reliable assessment standards across the state system
• Tracking a child/student’s progress from year to year and recording this in annual reports to parents
• Advising parents/guardians on how the progress of their child might be improved resulting in:
  • Improved levels of community literacy
  • Services that ensure all Tasmanians develop the knowledge, skills and confidence they need
  • High quality education and training for lifelong learning and a skilled workforce.

Despite this long policy list, including many public purposes and the means of their enactment, when it comes to the “crunch” the public purposes do not seem to be given high priority. Three recent pieces of evidence support this assertion. The first relates to the speed with which ELs was dropped even though the media led attack on them related only to the reporting process and its use of plain English (see Chapter 4). The second relates to the emphasis in the evaluation of progress with *Tasmania Together* goals and standards. Report cards (http://www.tasmaniatogether.tas.gov.au – Snapshot of Progress) only report on a very narrow set of outcomes using literacy and numeracy scores. The third revolves around the recent (November, 2008) placing of data about each government school on the Tasmanian Department of Education website. This publically available information while it does expand outcome measures of school improvement to include once-a-year surveys of general staff, parent and student satisfaction and a measures of early years readiness for school and indigenous equity, still gives the dominant emphasis to what is thought to be most easily measured, such as student literacy, numeracy and student and staff attendance.

3.3 Policy Maker Interviews

3.3.1 Introduction

What do the major Tasmanian educational policy makers have to say about the public purposes of education and their enactment and the factors that can act as barriers or facilitators to enactment? In what follows, the agreed transcripts of 90 minute interviews with the Tasmanian Minister for Education (and subsequently also Premier), David Bartlett, Secretary of the Department of Education, John Smyth, and President of the Tasmanian and Australian Council of State School Organisations, Jenny Branch, are summarised. The interview schedule asked what are public purposes, how are they enacted, including the areas that can best be carried out centrally by an education system, and the barriers and facilitators to successful implementation (see Appendix 2). After these summaries we highlight similarities and differences across the interviews.

3.3.2 Minister of Education (now subsequently also Premier) - David Bartlett

*What are public purposes?*

“Equity, prosperity and democracy.”

“I think public education has been significantly weakened in this country over the last 10 years by a parent exodus, Federal Government policy and by a media approach by particular outlets … by running shock-horror stories all the time.”

“[W]hat I’ll be really interested in out of this research is [how we translate the] pretty lofty ideals of equity, prosperity and democracy [into practice]. How do you translate that into how school operate, what they do on a daily basis? … That’s really hard stuff.”

*Enactment*

*Equity* – “adjust formula to fund higher need schools much better”
But, for example, “just adding equitable distribution of technology doesn’t actually mean that you’ve got equity in terms of the opportunity that comes from it in any way, shape or form. … [S]o while Rudd’s is talking about … no child will live without a computer, what does a child do when they go home and … they don’t have the funds to be connected?”

Prosperity – “education is obviously a fundamental of achieving and improving [state/national] prosperity, and it is like to … inequity”.

“We have … 9,500 kids in Tasmania … 18-20 year olds … who are not participating in any form of training or education … .” [At the same time] “we’ve got not only a skill shortage, we’ve got a labour shortage as well, and we have the most significant participation problems in the labour force of any state in Australia.”

Democracy – “… public education is the cornerstone of democracy.”

“The less engaged the community is in their democracy the less effective it is … .”

If all the community, “not just the chattering class”, “come to learn that engagement with a system like a school can have positives impacts on their lives, that might result in them [becoming] … lifelong learners, being more engaged in their community and being more engaged in their democracy.” “[E]ducation and getting them engaged in their schools is a great and fundamental start to that.”

“How do you get them more engaged? You offer them … more decision making, and a more visible impact … my intention is to empower school communities to have more say over their individual school.”

“I’m not an educator, I don’t have a real understanding in each individual kid’s life and each classroom ….”

“I’ve got a standard media release … [w]henever another politician puts out a media release that ‘Bartlett should be doing this in schools’ … my standard statement is ‘These are decisions that individual schools and their communities’ ….”

“I’m not sure I can measure [democracy] … and it’s such a long term measure … .”

What areas best carried out centrally?

“There’s a real separation between the department and the schools, and it’s … 10 paces apart daggers drawn … .” However, there some areas best undertaken centrally such as IT, finance and HR practice.

IT – Although he believes that “it’s not about the technology itself, … it’s about what you do with the technology and how you engage in that technology, and whether it’s going to be used for good or not … .”

Finance – although he believes that “You can double the budget and not make any difference to attaining public … purposes.”

“[T]he names of departments are actually great indicators of where the strength in public policy lies and where the interest is … . We should be creating a department of education, children and their families … particularly for our high-needs communities for the interface between education, health and human services … . It’s an argument that I think is worth having a community debate about.”

But “[t]here are things that belong in [a] next [middle] layer, the learning services layer, because they should be there to serve the schools … [and lessen] administrivia … that we don’t want to burden schools with … . Schools should be places of teaching and learning … .” “[T]aking it back one level still allows principals, in a strategic sense, to control the policy, … have a say over how resources are best distributed on their behalf, but this doesn’t mean that they have to do the actual distributing themselves … .” “[W]hat I genuinely want to see is the learning services serving, having a culture of service not a culture of directing. We’re not here to tell schools what to do, we’re here to serve schools and their needs.”

Barriers/Facilitators

“[T]he Australian Education Union needs to work out whether it’s about improving the profession of teaching its it’s a … industrial union in the style of the BLF, … can it be both of these things? Maybe, but it doesn’t do enough to increase the status of the profession of teaching and therefore attract over time … better and better people to it … .”
“A strong, well educated, continuously learning teaching force is fundamental to achieving public purposes … .”

“… I see school principals as the embodiment of a school community … . [W]e need to distribute power to them, empower them to represent their school communities’ aspirations better. … You need to change the culture to be one of empowering principals genuinely to make decisions about the resources available to the system as a whole and directing that resource … strategically in the system as a whole. They are the people … who have the collective wisdom to make better decisions … rather than me and my bureaucracy making decisions for them.” “[P]rincipals for ages have been saying ‘You’re making the wrong decisions’. Well now I want them to make those decisions. They don’t like it and perhaps they never will, but it’s still, I believe, a better way of making decisions.”

However “we use the word ‘autonomy’ about principals [but] … I don’t think autonomy exists [especially] … in any public sector organisation that I’ve ever worked in … . In this sense … autonomy is a rubbish word … .”

“We need to invest more in leadership skills, [especially] the large “next cohort coming through … .”

Transparent evidence – “[T]he books are open … all the school improvement boards are seeing the data and the financial data, and the school-based data, for all the schools in their area, and this is pretty challenging sort of stuff because for the first time there’s genuine transparency … .”

3.3.2 Secretary of Department of Education – John Smyth

What are public purposes?

In order to answer this question, “I need to go for guidance to the Minister”, “Tasmania Together Benchmarks”, “the Federalist paper, and “the change of context”. “I [then] look at the outcomes of our education system and say ‘How well can Tasmanians participate in a democracy, [be] citizens, [and] how inclusive these are. … It’s a fine community and I love living in it, but I’m concerned that 50% of Tasmanian adults are functionally illiterate, and I’m not sure that if you’re functionally illiterate that you can totally participate in that breadth of public purpose. … [W]hen you look at the PISA results … you see just how long our tail is. … A lot of our kids aren’t on the runway. … I’m concerned that 67% of 18-29 year-olds aren’t learning, either in education or training, and don’t have a capacity to participate in … increasingly more technical and more demanding work. … [They’re] in jobs that aren’t going to lead anywhere in the next 20 years. … [H]aving employment and a disposable income at some stage in your life actually enables you to make more life choices. … [A]lso, I’m not convinced that the harmony is … constructive, an active engagement … in these [public purposes] value systems.”

BUT “I shouldn’t even be the one who determines what the public purpose is. … [I]t’s got to be for [Learning Services Boards of six principals and two outsiders] to work with their school communities.”

“I can’t quite see how you disconnect [public and private purposes]. … I don’t believe you can have one without the other.”

Enactment?

“I’ve come to remember just how conservative in terms of change the education [and general] community is.”

“[N]ot all our schools are democratic in purpose.

- Not all our staff meetings have all the staff in them. Sometimes staff meet and it’s only teachers. … We don’t actually live [public purposes] in schools. … [W]hen talking] to 16 groups of teachers randomly chosen … you came away with … how passionate they were to actually contribute more. …
- “… the education community doesn’t think strongly about [the 67% of young people].

“It’s just very dark between where our good schools are and where our less good schools are.”
More broadly “[It’s] barely rated a mention in the media … and … putting it in front of the …

general community hasn’t stirred up a real issue.”

“A great demonstration of [public purposes] not being enacted [is] … why it has evolved ..

that 60% of young people do not continue [in education] when everything in our society says

they need to?”

“Now is the time to be focussing on [leadership] because a lot of that conservatism is an

opportunity with the retirement rates to do something about it. If we wait too long then the

kind of people who are going to end up in the position are going to be in the same mould.”

“Our challenge as a system is how to support … the work that principals do. … [I]f you

actually trust people, give them the resources and capacity, they do things that far exceed

anything you could ‘manage’ them to do. How do you add value to what the very best

principals in the very best schools and the very best school communities are trying to do?

That presupposes that you’ve got the leadership that’s right, that it’s not chieftains, that it is in

fact embedding much of the public purpose in the way school runs and the way the school

functions, and the way the school works, and the way the school is or the being of the school

– we’re a fair way from this in all of our schools.”

What are best areas carried out centrally?

“There’s … a very significant resource in four learning services accountable to a Board of six

principals and two outside people. I don’t control that money. They haven’t worked out they

do actually control it, … or, if they’ve worked it out I’m not sure they want … the

responsibility. … I guess what I lead is some process that says ‘I’m prepared to trust six

principals with a quarter of the Department’s resource. … But the don’t believe it. … [In]

three years if the still don’t believe it, I’ll be … bitterly disappointed. But the opportunity is

there for them…”

“The best and most successful relationship is a relationship between teachers and the kids. It’s

the teachers who will make the biggest difference in what kids achieve in public purposes …

and my job is to get out of the way of that, but to add value in whatever way I can to make

that possible, but to give signals to school communities about what they can do and how they

can build.”

“[W]hat are the accountabilties? … [C]learly you’re going to jump to the literacy and

numeracy national benchmarks. …[B]ut if you don’t have a portfolio of stories, if you don’t

have a narrative about … your public purposes and your public purpose achievements, …

you’re not telling the whole story about your school. … [I]t’s a dammed sight more than a set

of numbers. … [Y]ou say to the kids and parents ‘We are really pleased that 80% of our kids

got the literacy benchmark … [and] we’re pleased that this and/or that student … gave

something back to this community’.”

Barriers/Facilitators?

Barriers:

“Equity is a huge challenge.”

“[E]ducation is isolated from the rest of he community. We tend to engage well with parents.

I think we need a stronger engagement with the university, with business, with groups in the

community.”

“Shockingly competitive principals … [We need principals with] less cynicism, … able to

manage with teams of people, … [and] truly able to network. … [E]verything that you see in

good communities today … is about networking and partnership and partnerships, and about

moving forward in a way that really builds value between relationships.”

“If the general community doesn’t have the capacity to act with public purpose, Tasmania

Together isn’t as effective in what it does, and the place that comes from is the education

system … building up from the bottom, through real democracy, through real citizenship,

through real engagement, consultation, collaboration, participation. I suppose that to me

would be the richest sort of education system that could be.”

Facilitators:
“Select the very best teachers … develop them very, very well in their schools and … focus on the kids who are not achieving. … But we’re not as strongly focused on these as we should.”
“I wouldn’t put the Mercury [newspaper] in the classroom.”

3.3.2 President of the Australia Council of State School Organisations (ACSSOS) – Jenny Branch

What are public purposes?
“Public education … [is] under threat of being diminished down to a sub-standard education system that would be of little use for any Australian child. We have been in a time where we’ve been given this word ‘choice’ … but unfortunately in the real world we don’t all have choice. Some of us only have one avenue that we can pursue to educate our child, and that is the public education system. So, it’s my organisation’s job and my personal passion to ensure we have the best public education system in this country, for all children.”
“I don’t think we’ve managed to [put into practice] all the lessons we’ve learnt … about the need to balance … literacy, numeracy, social skills, … and thinking and being. … [For example,] one of the things we’ve really been struggling with at the moment at a national level is languages. … I don’t think we can narrow the curriculum down without doing some damage to our children, because this is a fast-moving world. In the area of technology [this change] can be overnight.”

Enactment?
“[O]ne of the things governments have to learn to do is to take parents on the journey with them, and often they don’t. They give top-down decisions that then they expect people to take off and run with joy because ‘this must be the right thing to do’. … [U]nless you take them on the journey you’re often going to fail with these programs.”
“I think a lot of state schools around Australia … probably think they’ve been in a really competitive surfing competition, and they’ve been riding so many waves that are going up and down that they don’t really know where they are. … [T]eachers are really committed to producing the best outcome they can, but how can they in such a sea of turbulence? We need to settle down … and … not change the goal posts every time they go 50 metres.”
“[W]e need to start putting ourselves into a global context.”

What are best areas carried out centrally?
“I want accountability to be about the right things, … accountability that’s going to improve things for students … and not better outcomes for government. … [Outcomes such as] is the child happy at the end of the day, … able to collaborate, … [and] able to recognise difference and accept it.”

Barriers/Facilitators?
Barriers:
“Governments, funding, community preconceived ideas, … and time to rebuild.”
“Schools are not insular groups any more like they used to be years ago…. [T]here are so many pushes and pulls on public schools … [and] when we unpack things it’s not about what is best for the children but … the bottom dollar. … [W]e need to] look at it from the other way of where are we going to spend more, how are we going to invest because this is going to benefit our whole future and save us in other areas. Until we can turn that mindset around we are still going to be having a lot of problems with public education.”

“[W]e’re looking at education from a lot of short-term perspectives these days … not looking 30 or 40 years ahead where we really should be looking to sustain a really good education system.”
We’ve seen the average well-meaning parent … thinking ‘Am I doing good enough by my child by sending them to a public school?’ There’s been a lot of negative, often incorrect
information about what public schools are offering our children. … [The] media has played a big part.”
“[S]ome of the parents just haven’t been given the support or the skills that their parents had before.”
Facilitators:
“[W]e have to get the government … really standing up and saying ‘Public education is a good thing’, because I’m not sure that the government we’ve been under over the last few years has really had their heart and soul in public education.”
“[G]etting groups of people together … working on a long-term plan. [S]omething I’m very strong on and the national body is committed to is family/school partnerships. … [W]e have to learn to let other people in [schools] and start engaging them in education. … [I]t has to take into account cross-sectional people as well … [such as from] health. … [I]t takes a village to bring up a child. We have to start using the village and being really committed to the child as the centre of that village. … [I]t’s working together where we will become a greater Australia.”
“[W]e have to focus on the early years … because that’s when they start disengaging. It’s not that they get to grade 10 and suddenly say ‘Oh, I’ve had enough of school’. … [W]e always try to fix things along the line at the wrong point; … we see a problem, we put a bandaid on it. Now we have to start right from the beginning, start making significant changes, and start working through so that we fix the problems from start to finish. … [W]e play twinkle toes around the edges. We’ve been doing it for ages and we really need to get down to some of the solid stuff … to move the agenda forward.”
“[R]eports [have] got to be timely and anything delivered at the end of the year telling how a child has gone, is not timely. [Broadening what is reported to include public purposes such as citizenship, equity and social justice is] a continuing conversation. … We’re trying to get … national consistency at the moment. … I don’t think any of us, be it the parents or governments, are quite clear what direction it’s going to take or what it’s going to mean.”

3.3.4 Summary
The Minister had the clearest and most succinct understanding of the public purposes of education. He saw these purposes as equity, prosperity and democracy. While the Secretary mentioned the ability of all to participate in a democracy and to be citizens, he could not see the public purposes being separated from private purposes. He also believed it was not for him but those closer to schools to decide. The ACSSOS President interpreted the question as referring to public schools.

In terms of the enactment of the public purposes of education, the Minister stressed the need to adjust the funding formula to favour higher needs schools and to encourage and support community engagement in schools. He saw the latter strategy needing to be made more attractive by offering the community greater opportunities for decision making and for them to see they were having a visible impact. The Secretary was mainly concerned about the very conservative nature of the community towards change and the fact that not all schools live public purposes in the way they operated. He saw the challenge for the system being to devolve more to principals and their communities while at the same time supporting principals to add value. Investment in leadership skills, especially for the large new cohort, was seen as crucial. The ACSSOS President saw the need to give greater emphasis to taking parents on the journey and the increasingly global context but less emphasis to competition among schools and constant changes.

The Minister believed that functions such as IT, finance and HR practice were best handled centrally as well as linking education, health and human services, especially in high needs communities. But he also saw the need for learning services to be handled at a middle or regional level so that principal representatives could be involved in policy setting. The Secretary believed the centre was in a good position to send signals regarding educational
priorities and how best to achieve them, as well as deciding on accountabilities. It was interesting that he saw accountabilities as needing to use broad measures (for both what and how). The ACSSOS President also focussed on the centre’s role in accountability but pointed out that it needed to be broader than was currently the case. She saw the need to broaden accountability to include happy, collaborative students who recognise and accept difference.

The Minister saw the teacher’s union and its industrial rather than professional stance as hindering the achievement of the public purposes of education. On the other hand, he saw public purposes being facilitated through a well educated, continually learning teaching force, empowered principals and transparency in evidence (including budgets). He also saw the importance of developing leadership skills in school principals. The Secretary worried about education’s isolation from the rest of the community and that community’s lack of capacity to act with public purpose. Contributing to this situation were competitive, cynical principals who had poor relationship and networking skills and an unsympathetic media. He saw public purposes being facilitated by selecting the best teachers and developing them in their schools, especially where they focussed on non-achieving students. The ACSSOS President saw constraints on the public purposes of education as including the government, funding levels, preconceived ideas, and a lack of time to rebuild. She saw political short term thinking, the media’s attack on public schools and the lack of parental support and skills as exacerbating the situation. She saw the mindset needing to change from short to long term and from the ‘bottom dollar’ to ‘what is best for children’. In addition, she believed governments needed to publicly state that ‘government education is good’, that family/school relationships were valued and that early years education was a priority.

These views about what is public education how it is enacted and the hindering and facilitating forces to its enactment are summarised in the Table at the end of the chapter on the next page (an ‘x’ indicated a similar view).

### 3.4 Comparison of Policy Documents and Policy Maker Interviews

Comparison of Tasmanian educational policy and policy maker’s views on the purposes of education and their enactment are similar in respect of promoting a strong emphasis on the public purposes such as equity and democratic citizenship. The policy documents go further than the policy makers by including related concepts such as social responsibility, justice and capital, shared and sustainable futures, wide (in terms of groups and areas) participation, and support for diversity and disadvantage.

What is striking is the number and rapidity of change in Tasmanian policy documents in recent years. There is sense that educational change can only be successfully delivered through policy pronouncements. There is also mounting evidence that while there are many educational purposes and means to enact them, there is a very limited number given priority. Only a few areas are evaluated in any detail and therefore, it could be argued, valued. Very few of these areas relate to the public purposes of education and their enactment.

The policy maker interviews do suggest greater enactment of the public purposes of education would occur with more encouragement and support for community involvement in schools (Minister) and greater devolution to and support for school and parent communities (Secretary). Public purposes would be further facilitated by investing in leadership skills, especially for the large new cohort of empowered principals and a well educated, continually learning teaching force (Minister and Secretary). However a number of forces are seen to hinder public purposes of education and their enactment including an unsympathetic media (Minister, Secretary, ACSSOS), a conservative community (Secretary, ACSSOS), competitive and cynical principals with poor networking skills (Secretary, ACSSOS), a
teachers’ union that is industrial rather than professional (Minister), and lack of government support in terms of resources, time to rebuild when changes occur and public statements (ACSSOS).

The Tasmanian media is seen by policy makers and school principals (see above and Chapter 5) as being particularly unsympathetic to public education. Is there any evidence for this position? In order to explore this question the next Chapter analyses in depth the articles reported in the Hobart’s Mercury newspaper over a seven year period about the implementation of major curriculum change (ELs) that included as a major focus the public purposes of education.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Public Purposes of Education</th>
<th>Minister</th>
<th>Secretary</th>
<th>ACSSOS President</th>
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<tr>
<td>What?</td>
<td>Equity</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Prosperity</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Democracy/Citizenship</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>How? (Enactment)</td>
<td>Funding formulas</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Encourage and support community involvement in schools</td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Devolution to and support for school and parent communities</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Schools need to live public purposes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Hindering Forces</td>
<td>Union industrial rather than professional emphasis</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Very conservative community especially regarding change</td>
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<td>x</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Community that is unable to act on public purposes</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Competitive, cynical principals</td>
<td></td>
<td>Competition among schools</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Principals with poor relationship and networking skills</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Unsatisfactory media</td>
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<td>x</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Low government funding</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lack of time to rebuild</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Short term thinking such as the ‘bottom dollar’ rather than what is best for children</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lack of parental support and skills</td>
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<tr>
<td>Facilitating Forces</td>
<td>Investment in leadership skills, especially for large new cohort of principals</td>
<td>x</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Empowered principals</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Well educated, continually learning teaching force</td>
<td></td>
<td>Selecting best teachers and developing them in schools, especially for non-achieving students</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Transparent evidence, including budgets</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Government needs to state that public education is ‘good’, that family/school relationships are valued and that early years education is a priority</td>
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4.1 Introduction

What role does the media play in the enactment of the public purposes of education? The aim of this case study is to analyse the articles reported in the Hobart’s *Mercury* newspaper about the implementation of major curriculum change that included as a major focus the public purposes of education, i.e., the ELs curriculum during the first six years of the twenty-first century. One hundred and forty one articles related to the ELs curriculum were published between September 2000 and June 2007 (see Chart 4.1). The context in which those articles were written is described in the next section and is also summarised in Chart 4.1.

This case study of Hobart’s *Mercury* newspaper reporting on the Tasmanian Essential Learnings (ELs) Curriculum is organised into four further sections. Section 2 outlines the changing context within which schools have operated in Tasmania, section 3 the Hobart *Mercury* reporting of the ELs curriculum, section 4 lessons learned, and section 5 concluding comments.
4.2. The Changing Context within which Schools Operate in Tasmania

4.2.1 The Essential Learnings Curriculum (ELs)

In February 1999 the Tasmanian Premier, Jim Bacon, initiated *Tasmania Together*, a strategy intended to develop a 20 year social, environmental and economic plan for Tasmania. A Community Leaders’ Group held 60 forums across Tasmanian communities to hear views about social, environmental and economic issues. Following extensive consultation representatives of government agencies, community groups and the Community Leaders’ Group engaged in a benchmarking process representing six areas: Community Well Being; Employment and Economy; Sustainable Development; Arts, Culture and Heritage; and Open Inclusive Government. In September 2001 The Community Leaders Group released the vision, goals and benchmarks for *Tasmania Together*.

In mid 1999 a separate, but complementary process was begun by the Minister for Education, Paula Wriedt, who held a series of meetings with Department of Education officials and representatives from principals’ associations, teacher and public sector unions, and parent associations at which concerns about issues relating to education were raised, as evidenced by the following articles in the Hobart *Mercury*.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MERCURY</th>
<th>Tue 12 Sep 2000, Page 10</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Schools open doors to community role</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>The <em>Mercury</em> urged the Tasmanian community to have a say in the education of its children as part of the Education Department’s Curriculum consultation program. A departmental spokesperson said education from birth to year 10 was being considered and participants were asked to focus on what values and purposes they wanted to underpin education, that it was important to include parents, students and business in the consultation process. It was reported by the Department coordinator of the consultation process that “We have had a huge response from parents and have already held a successful forum for industry in the north of the state.”</td>
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<tr>
<th>MERCURY</th>
<th>Fri 17 Nov 2000, Page 12</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>School report deadline</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>The <em>Mercury</em> advised that parents only had that day to respond to the draft copy of the Curriculum Consultation Report: Values and Purposes.</td>
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</table>

Outcomes of these discussions were draft proposals for education, training and information provision that were released for public review over a two month period in February 2000. Over 160 responses were received. The early period of consultations consisted of identifying the goals and purposes of a new curriculum, the formation of a consultation team and participation of partnership schools. The model for participation was one of co-construction.

Selected in November 2000, 20 partnership schools worked with the Consultation Team throughout 2001 to refine the ‘working’ new curriculum, to be called the Essential Learnings (ELs). They determined outcomes and standards to describe knowledge, skills and competencies, and identified teaching and assessment practices consistent with the values and purposes.

Five goal-based working groups took the five themes that emerged from the public consultation process, and identified concrete actions and strategies to achieve these goals. A policy statement, *Learning Together*, was released by the Minister in December 2000. *Learning Together* was intended to complement *Tasmania Together*. (For comments made by the Minister at the launch of Learning Together please refer to Appendix 1.)

In June 2001 a 13 member Learning Together Council was formed by the Minister to monitor the implementation of the 46 strategies consisting of 139 initiatives matched to the five goals. The Learning Together Council reported directly to the Minister and had the power to request
4.2 Development and Implementation of the Essential Learnings Curriculum Framework

Following the release of the draft proposals for education, training and information provision in February 2000, a nine-member Consultation Team was appointed to conduct a three-year project to develop a curriculum, consisting of three phases: clarifying values and purposes; specifying content; and developing teaching and assessment practices. Beginning in June 2000, district reference groups led more than 6,900 teachers, child-care professionals, business people, community members and students at meetings focusing on clarifying the values and purposes of public education. The report on the consultation, released in October 2000, led to the publication of a statement in December 2000 identifying seven values and six purposes as important.

Values:
We are guided by a set of core values
- Connectedness
- Resilience
- Achievement
- Creativity
- Integrity
- Responsibility
- Equity

Purposes:
We share the purposes of ensuring our students and children are:
- Learning to relate, participate and care
- Learning to live full and healthy lives
- Learning to create purposeful futures
- Learning to act ethically
- Learning to learn
- Learning to think, know and understand

The Values and Purposes Statement formed the basis for developing ‘emerging’ essential learnings. Responses collected from a review were used to produce ‘working’ essential learnings consisting of five categories, each containing a description and several key elements. Practitioners in schools were insistent that ‘thinking’ be included.

Essential Learnings:
1. Thinking
1. Inquiry
   a. Reflective thinking

2. Communicating
   a. Being literate
   b. Being numerate
   c. Being information literate
   d. Being arts literate

3. Personal futures
   a. Building and maintaining identity and relationships
   b. Maintaining wellbeing
   c. Being ethical
   d. Creating and pursuing goals

4. Social responsibility
   a. Building social capital
   b. Valuing diversity
   c. Acting democratically
   d. Understanding the past and creating preferred futures

5. World futures
   a. Investigating the natural and constructed world
   b. Understanding systems
   c. Designing and evaluating technological solutions
   d. Creating sustainable futures

The process used to create the ELs curriculum framework was also ‘public’ employing extensive meetings and discussions with parents, teachers, business leaders and members of the community to identify the public purposes of education, not only in terms of the benefits to the individual, but particularly in terms of promoting the welfare of the whole community. The product of these discussions, The Essential Learnings Curriculum Framework, clearly articulates the public purposes of education, such as learning to relate to others and participation in workplace and community life and having a regard for others. Public purposes include living full and healthy lives, creating purposeful futures, acting ethically, thinking, knowing and understanding. These are exemplified in the key elements of the ELs that highlight the public purposes of education through a focus on social responsibility, world futures and particularly through the skill development of thinking and communicating.

Teachers from more than 40 schools (i.e. the initial 20 schools that commenced the project in 2001 plus an additional 20 schools who joined in 2002) worked with the Consultation Team during 2002 to specify sets of expectations for students at different levels to provide the basis for outcomes and standards. As a result of this work, in March, 2003, the Tasmanian Department of Education released Essential Learnings Framework consisting of three components. Introduction to the Outcomes and Standards outlines the structure of the framework, and describes reporting procedures and support available to assist teachers. Outcomes and Standards organised the key element outcomes and standards by the key elements of the essential learnings. Learners and Learning Provision discusses some key advances in the understanding of how learning occurs, and what is known about distinctive features of learners at different stages in their development. Developed by the Consultation Team and 53 partnership schools, the Learning, Teaching and Assessment Guide, released on the Internet in April 2003, described effective teaching, assessing, planning, professional learning, transforming schools, working with parents and the community, and different levels of schooling and essential learnings. The Learning, Teaching and Assessment Guide was designed to be dynamic, and undergo refinement and expansion on the Internet.

The intention was to phase implementation of the Essential Learnings Framework in public, Catholic and some independent schools over five years commencing in 2004 with full implementation in 2009. In 2004, the Department of Education released several resources to
support implementation of the Essential Learnings Framework.5

4.2.3 Change following the ELs implementation process and the impact on Tasmanian schools

2005 became a turning point in the acceptance by teachers of the ELs due to the introduction of mandatory assessment and reporting process together with the restructuring of the Department of Education following the 2004 Essential Learnings for All Report (Executive Summary see Appendix 3). The Essential Learnings for All Report completed for the Department of Education in June 2004 by a private consulting firm and released to the public in October 2004 followed a Review of Services for Students with Special and/or Additional Educational Needs. The report stated that

... a truly inclusive system of public education with Essential Learnings for All needs to be reflected in an organisational structure that underpins, guarantees and leads the inclusive learning of all students. In such an organisational structure, service provision places students with special and/or additional needs in the mainstream. It does this by securing the tightest possible alignment between all aspects of its operations. It ensures that support for all students is placed as closely as possible to the schools in which they learn.

The sequence of events and ensuing outcomes can be outlined as follows:

Mandatory reporting

In September 2004 the Department of Education advised schools that reporting on the ELs Curriculum would be mandatory in 2005, despite the fact that many schools had not commenced participation in activities associated with the implementation of the ELs. This action on the part of the Department of Education was significant, as until this time, the model used was one of co-construction. In addition, it was a requirement of the Department of Education that teachers used the computerised Student Assessment and Reporting Information System (SARIS) for all student reports.

Essential Learnings for All Report

The adoption of the Essential Learnings for All Report (Appendix 2) meant major changes for the structure of the Department and the accountability processes for the delivery of services to schools prior to the commencement of 2005. Resources to support students with special needs had previously been allocated centrally and by the six education districts. In order for decisions to be made as closely as possible to the delivery point, as recommended in the report, the distribution of resources to support students with special needs would now be made by principals within each newly created cluster of schools.

The Department of Education changed from six education districts to three branches. Schools were grouped into 26 clusters made up of varying numbers of schools in reasonably close proximity to each other.

A-E Federal Government reporting requirements.

During August 2005 the Federal Government Education Minister, Brendan Nelson reiterated his determination to have a plain language report card for Tasmanian students. He proposed that all students should be rated A to E on their reports to enable parents to gain a clearer, simpler picture of their children’s progress. In September 2005 he threatened that $341

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million worth of federal schools funding could be affected if a suitable report card was not issued. Such a mandated approach caused much deliberation as to how the requirements of both the state and the federal Minister for Education could be met. The result was that students received two reports in December 2005 due to problems equating the five standards and progressions relating to student achievement in the ELs with the A-E scale.

**Language of reports**
In September 2005 the shadow education minister for the Tasmanian Liberal opposition party raised the issue of the appropriateness of the language – the jargon – used in the student reporting process mandated by the Department of Education. The ‘jargon buster’ produced by the Department of Education was intended to be helpful for teachers when compiling reports. However, it’s release into the public domain added fuel to the debate about the quality of the language in student reports. The appropriateness of the proposed student reports was the subject of intense media focus by the *Mercury* newspaper during September and continuing into October, 2005.

An analysis of articles relating to the reporting to parents on student progress showed that the first media reporting commenced in October 2004 and reached a crisis point in September/October 2005. What was particularly noticeable was the minimal response by the hierarchy of the Department of Education in the *Mercury* to defuse or clarify issues during the public debate. This occurred despite the fact that the Department made it publicly known that teachers, under the Public Service Act, were not permitted to comment publicly on the issue. The Minister for Education was on leave in September 2004 when the *Mercury* frenzy on student reporting commenced and thus may have entered the debate too late to make a difference, or gain control of the situation. Failure to adequately resolve the issue of student reporting led to criticism of the ELs and the ultimate demise of the ELs curriculum under the jurisdiction of a new Minister for Education in 2006.

**Tasmanian State Election March 2006 – change of Education Minister**
The Minister for Education, Paula Wriedt, struggled to retain her seat following the state election, just managing to be elected after the distribution of preferences. *Mercury* reporting at the time attributed the unpopularity of the ELs curriculum as part of the reason for her low number of votes. Ms Wriedt had been Minister of Education for nearly eight years and had personally overseen changes in Tasmanian aimed at achieving her vision of an education system based on world’s best practice. The newly appointed Minister for Education, David Bartlett, immediately ordered a review of the ELs curriculum, the outcome of which has been that the ELs curriculum has undergone severe modification to make it more acceptable to the community, employers and some teachers. The new Tasmania curriculum no longer represents the original ELs curriculum. In addition modifications were made to the reporting process. The new, revised curriculum is now referred to as the Tasmania Curriculum. Curriculum documents were rewritten and distributed to schools in July/August 2007. The Minister also made the decision to restructure the Department in order to better provide services to schools. The decision to restructure the Education Department meant that schools were experiencing a third, major structural and organisational change within four years.

**Restructuring of the Department of Education – Again, 2007**
The Minister for Education, with the intent of placing ‘the student at the centre’ restructured schools into four Learning Centres from the beginning of 2007, each with a former principal as its general manager. One Centre is on the North-West Coast, one in Northern Tasmania and two centres in the South (South and South-East) of the state. Each centre will have its own board of management comprised of principals and members of the community. Complementary to these changes was the down-sizing of the central support services of the

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*Some publically wondered where the students had been all this time!*
Department of Education and the establishment of a leaner system located in the Learning Centres. In addition, there would be one small and strategic central unit, Learning Support, to coordinate policy and research. The five general managers will be members of the Department’s corporate management team and will report directly to the Education Department Secretary. One intent of the restructuring is, at a later stage, to sell the education department head office following the relocation of essential departmental services into under-utilised school building stock.

The majority of changes, in the context in which Tasmanian schools have operated during the past six years, are reflected in the reporting of education in Hobart’s Mercury Newspaper. During the seven year period 2000 – 2007 one hundred and forty one articles relating to the ELs were published (See appendix 4 for a summary of each article).

4.3. Mercury reporting on the Essential Learnings (ELs) Curriculum

4.3.1 Public release of ELs 2002

The Hobart Mercury published two articles on the Essential Learnings in March 2002, the first following reports of the consultation process in 2000. This article provided a very detailed description of the ELs, listing the five essential learnings and the key elements for each.

Reporter Alison Ribbon reported on the launch of the ELs at the Clarence High School. The Minister of Education, Paula Wriedt, advised that the ELs Framework had been developed in 2000 and tested in 20 different project schools in 2001 for relevance and practicality. Ms Wriedt said this was the first time such a new framework had been formulated with input from stakeholders. She went on to say, “Across the world and throughout Australia recently there has been a search for new curriculum approaches suited to new times and new student needs.”

In the same article the Education Department Secretary is reported to have said that he could not specify what noticeable changes would be made in schools – the department had simply established a framework for schools to incorporate if, when and how they wished. (Future actions by the Department of Education in mandating the reform agenda would prove to be the undoing of ELs.)

No further articles referring to the ELs appeared until April 2004. Initially, the number of schools in the ELs project increased by 20 per year, however, by 2004 all schools were participating at varying levels, each with their own ELs co-ordinator.

4.3.2 Two years on: 2004

The first article announced the release of the ‘dynamic and practical online resource’ the Learning, Teaching and Assessment Guide that highlights what has been learned by schools and their communities about learning, teaching and assessing as they work with the new curriculum.

Quality sample units of work for each of the different year levels have been placed on the guide. The Director of the Office for Curriculum, Leadership and Learning, David Hanlon, is reported to have said, “Foundational to all our work was the idea that we really needed to talk to all Tasmanians about what it was they wanted for our public education system.”
In June 2004 The *Mercury*, under its headline, *Study at Harvard online*, reported that Harvard offered courses such as Engaging Students in Deeper Understanding and Teaching to Standards with New Technologies, both directly based on the Teaching for Understanding Guide. A further article in August entitled, *Experts in literacy*, reinforced the positive aspects of ELs through a focus on the communicating element of the ELs framework in a Hobart primary school.

### 4.3.3 Mandated changes cause concern

Six articles concerning the ELs including three sets of Letters to the Editor were published in the *Mercury* between 21 and 31 October, 2004. The introduction of ELs into the school sector, to this date, had been phased in, with schools progressively coming on stream. Despite the fact that many schools had yet to adopt the ELs it was mandated by the Department of Education that all schools would adopt the Essential Learnings Framework, and, New assessments for students from kindergarten to year 10 would be enforced in 2005. In addition, from the commencement of 2005, the Department of Education was to be restructured into three Branches and 26 clusters of schools.

The AEU survey of 1334 teachers across the state showed 92% said they did not have a good understanding of the marking system. The Union doesn’t have problems with the curriculum, only with the time frame. Some schools have been working with ELs for four years but some have only been on since last year. Peter Gutwein, the Opposition Spokesperson on Education asked, “If teachers are struggling with this new, obviously bureaucrat driven reporting system, how does Ms Wriedt expect parents to make head or tail of their child’s report cards? … Teachers and principals were also having to come to grips with the major restructure from six districts to three branches.”

The AEU said Tasmania’s curriculum and assessment overhaul had left teachers and parents behind. Several teachers said they would quit and knew others who were considering quitting out of anger and fear. Minister Wriedt said retirement rates were steady. One secondary senior teacher said the system was already creating mediocrity, “It’s not just assessment. The more subject areas become blurred, the more standards drop. It’s turning out mediocrity.”

Three of the eight Letters to the Editor on 25, 26 and 28 October expressed support for the ELS (Minister for Education, the President of the Tasmanian Principals Association and a teacher), one letter expressed the importance of changing to meet emerging needs and four correspondents vehemently opposed the change to the ELs curriculum.

However, Tasmanian high school principals have spoken out in support of the ‘state’s controversial ELs curriculum overhaul. The Clarence High School principal, who played a role in drafting the new system, said it was “built by teachers” and the Brooks High School principal said concerns about senior teachers going into early retirement were “alarmist . . . twaddle”. The Clarence principal added, “. . . the basic disciplines would continue to be taught in ways more relevant to today’s students.”

Whilst the opposition spokesperson on education referred to a major restructuring of the Department of Education in the *Mercury* on 21 October, above, the changes were not reported in the *Mercury* until 3 November 2004 with the Minister announcing the Essential Learnings For All implementation plan that adopted recommendations from the Atelier report (released in July 2004. (See Appendices).
4.3.4 Forging ahead with sweeping reforms

The Education Department planned sweeping reforms of Tasmania’s school system with the release of the Essential Learnings for All implementation Plan.

The Mercury Editorial of 10 December drew attention to . . . the fact that Tasmania was the worst performing state in Australia in the OECD survey of 15 year olds in 41 countries at reading, maths and science cannot be dismissed lightly. The Editor went on to say that at the very least, there is large discrepancy between the government’s rhetoric on education performance and what the international survey shows. “. . . that said, Ms Wriedt has at least admitted that there is a larger proportion of students in Tasmania performing at lower levels than the other states. . . . what they (the results) underscore is that Tasmania should be striving harder to top the table in future surveys. Only then will the reality match the political rhetoric.”

4.3.5 2005 “...a horror year” (predicted Peter Gutwein, Opposition spokesman on education)

During 2005 there were fifty four articles related to the ELs curriculum in the Mercury Newspaper. Five of these articles were positive, being published in the Learning section, Schools guide and Back to school features. Twenty two articles addressed the appropriateness of ELs, Twenty seven focussed on student reports – particularly the quality of the language, or jargon used to describe student achievement. One article expressed concern at the drift of enrolments to non-government schools while another chided the Secretary of the Department of Education for his use of jargon. An analysis of the two key areas articles reported on is as follows.

The number of articles published per month during 2005 peaked in September when both the appropriateness of the Essential Learnings curriculum and the method of reporting student progress came into question (Refer to Chart 4.2).
An analysis of the articles published by each reporter for the *Mercury* during 2005 revealed that 13 reporters contributed articles about two main areas: Essential Learnings and its merits as a curriculum and the appropriateness of reporting student progress. One reporter, Low Choy, contributed twenty articles, fifteen of which were printed during September. These were equally spread between the main areas of interest. Four of her articles reported on the positive aspects of the Essential Learnings curriculum. Martain was the other reporter who wrote principally about issues relating to the student reporting process (See chart 4.3)
4.3.6 Essential Learnings: - accept or reject?

Prior to September 2005 reporting of the ELs was positive. It was reported that Tasmanian schools will be watched by the rest of the country this year (2005), with educationists in other states keen to see how the essential Learnings curriculum will work. The Tasmanian Minister Wriedt was reported as saying, . . . The key to success is to be engaged in education. World class is not as simple as academic results . . . we are striving for success for all.

Professor Marilyn Fleer from Melbourne’s Monash University said that the new curriculum would help connect learning in schools with learning experiences outside of school. “I think you are going to see children who are more engaged,” she said, “It’s very much about authentic learning and engaging children.”

During the debate on the language used in reporting on the ELs to parents in September 2005 (Refer to next section) Professor Arnold, Dean of Education at the University of Tasmania, was reported in the media as saying that parents should not lose faith in the new Essential Learnings curriculum. She said, “It would be a shame to lose confidence in the new curriculum because of the language. Essential Learnings is based on the best theories of learning and thinking development available. Its foundations are very sound.” Professor Arnold said a possible explanation for students’ lack of enthusiasm for ELs was its intellectually challenging nature. “I say that because they are being asked to think about what they are learning, to engage with each other, to develop understanding, not just repeat memorised information,” she said. The Acting Minister for Education said that if Tasmanian children are to succeed we need them to be able to think independently with an emphasis on ideas and creativity. The Editor, in the Mercury Editorial of 12 September hoped that the Department of Education would seize on the words of the Dean as it goes about doing a better job of informing the Tasmanian Community – we are not talking about her (the Dean’s) defence of ELs and a stout one it was . . . it’s her lucid, uncomplicated explanation, in a single sentence, of what ELs is about.

The validity of the ELs curriculum came under increasingly intense scrutiny and criticism from the media, teachers and members of the community, during September and October, as the debate on the appropriateness of the language used in reporting student progress raged. The responses tended to indicate that change in education can be difficult to implement, particularly, for example, as the negative publicity on report writing increased wave of criticism of the Essential Learnings curriculum was spurned.

A secondary teacher claimed that, When the Department of Education enforcers are around we toe the party line, while a primary teacher stated, I don’t think the kids are learning nearly enough. The Education department understood that there were some concerns. The Liberal spokesman on education urged teachers to air their views publicly. In response Minister Wriedt said teachers have had opportunity to contribute to the discussion and the Deputy Secretary of Education asserted that . . . State Public Service employees must not make any public comment as part of their duties . . . without permission.
Two letters to the Editor, on 14 September, expressed support for the ELs expressing the views that, Students need to articulate their view thoughtfully and persuasively so they can fully participate in our community and ELs is a brave attempt to adapt the school curriculum to an ever changing world.

Student teachers were reported (15 September) as saying that the ELs curriculum is terrific but admitted to the reporter that it was the only way they know how to teach. It was also reported on that day that Tasmanian principals were getting annual bonuses of up to $10,000 if they successfully implemented the new ELs curriculum. The Tasmanian Principals Association President denied that this coloured principals’ views. The department advised that principals received, as part of an industrial agreement in 2003, 11% bonuses for the completion of an agreed plan.

Interestingly, on 17 September the Mercury reported that Education’s hierarchy was keen to pass the buck as far as clarifying matters re ELs. Regardless, all the swapping of “authoritative” statements would seem to indicate that the head honchos are trying to keep out of the line of fire. Also on that date a letter to the Editor claimed it was Not possible to defend ELs pushed on schools by a misguided minister.

A relief teacher near Launceston criticised the curriculum for requiring her to assess a child’s spirituality. She said she was worried that children would believe that nothing was right or wrong under the new enquiry based system that encouraged children to think for themselves. What is ethical behaviour? People have different views of what’s ethical. . . . when I ask about teaching and assessing values, I can’t get a good answer . . . knowledge and skills should come before enquiry based thinking. The Minister for Education slammed the criticism about spirituality.

Tasmania’s controversial Essential Learnings curriculum is the worst primary school system in Australia, according to a new national report. Benchmarking Australian Primary School Curricula blasts aspects of the ELs as being vague and lacking academic rigour. ELs was rated bottom of the class in all three subject areas the Federal Government report assessed. Dr Donnelly, the report’s author, noted that Victoria’s curriculum also employs the word essential, but unlike . . . Tasmania there is a greater recognition of the importance of academic discipline. Federal Minister Nelson said, the report recommends that Australia’s education system, which has been infected by what’s known as the out-comes based model, needs to return to a much more concise, prescriptive syllabus which teaches [in a way that] parents can understand and assess the progress of children on a year-to-year basis. (The ELs curriculum is described by Education Department personnel as being ‘standards based’, of which there are five.) Minister Wriedt said Dr Donnelly was an educational conservative who had authored other attacks on education. She said a recent Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development report backed Tasmania’s approach to learning. Minister Wriedt did launch a spirited defence of the ELs and blasted critics who suggested it was not teaching basics on 30 September 2005. Ms wried said the Federal report was only based on opinion, We are not at the bottom of the pile. We are highly competitive with other states . . . It makes me cross that people are putting weight on this report when it’s based on personal judgment and not results because the results don’t show that sort of ranking. Ms Wriedt said Dr Donnelly had not done his research well. He talks about how terrible out-comes based education is and how it has been tried in other parts of the world and failed miserably.
Finland outranks every other country in the OECD on the way their 15-year-old students perform and their system is outcomes based. Ms Wriedt said that the opposition’s description of ELs as an experiment was an outrageous and laughable statement – I’m the parent of a child at a government school. I’ve got my own child’s future at stake as well and I’m not going to experiment on him or anybody else’s children.

The Mercury asked parents and students to text them to: Tell us what you think of Essential Learnings. Does it work for you? If not, why not? Two students, three parents and one teacher responded in support of the ELs while four students, ten parents and three teachers expressed disapproval of the ELs.

Strong support for the ELs was received from Mercury Features writer, Greg Barnes who wrote that serious and generally vigorous research shows that Paula Wriedt’s education reforms are ensuring the state is doing a good deal better than Donnelly and his buddy, federal education minister, Brendan Nelson, suggest. Parents should consign Donnelly’s hatchet job to the waste bin.

The Union says that the Department of Education must stop giving the impression that only conservative or older teachers are criticising ELs as teachers across the age groups were critical of the state’s controversial new curriculum. Ms Walker said that just as teachers across a range of ages were critical of ELs, a range of teachers were supporting the new curriculum. . . I think with any radically new system there are bound to be things that can be criticised and then improved. . . . I think many teachers feel, rightly or wrongly, they aren’t allowed to criticise and that if they do there will be retribution . . . Some of them do find that a little ironic when the ELs is very much based on a critical thinking model.

Education Minister Paula Wriedt said ELs was supported across the profession and age was not a factor in whether or not teachers supported reform.

Professor Malcolm Skilbeck, an educational researcher and consultant, has been director of the Australian Curriculum Centre, Vice Chancellor of Deakin University, and Deputy Director for Education at the OECD in Paris wrote that . . . In the vanguard of educational innovation nationally, Tasmania’s program of Essential Learnings is squarely addressing the challenge (of aiming for the very highest standards of performance in learning while ensuring that the needs of every child are met in a fair and inclusive way) Similar changes in schooling and childcare are occurring or likely in all Australian states and territories. Why, then, are the Tasmanian and similar initiatives coming under fire, as in the just published report by Dr Kevin Donnelly Benchmarking Australian Primary School Curricula? The short answer is a bid by the Federal Government for power over the nation’s schools and teachers. The reasons states and territories want changes in their schools vary but four stand out: *A densely packed curriculum jungle lacking clear pathways for students and teachers. *Too many students not motivated to learn and are under-performing or dissatisfied with school or both. *The national requirement to foster innovation and creativity. *The widely acknowledged need for highly trained intelligence and ethical values in the resolution of complex environmental and social issue . . . The ELs are not a narrow prescription but challenge everyone to think more fundamentally about what kind of education we as a society need and how schooling can help us achieve fuller, more successful and, yes, more rewarding lives.

In this article Bantick revisits criticism of the ELs curriculum but also highlights strong support for the ELs. The union said that the majority of teachers were ready to assess ELs at
the end of the year, Gay Activist Rodney Croome said that ELs lays a foundation for a more creative, pluralistic and prosperous society in Tasmania. Catholic Education Director Dan White strongly endorsed ELs by saying, ELs is proving effective in lifting educational standards in Tasmania. It would be a pity to see the great work that has been done by many dedicated and conscientious teachers undermined in a debate over terminology. Bantick reported that that before ELs is dismissed as an unworkable, jargon laden and inappropriate educational experiment, it was worth reflecting on the words of Dr Barry McGraw, an Australian and previous director of ACER who now heads the OECD education directorate: Where there is more innovation in teaching practices and creativity, that’s how you convince parents public education is worthwhile. ELs curriculum needs reform but it may also need time.

ANZ chief economist Saul Eslake said that Tasmania’s poor education report card was a major contributor to poverty in the state. He said many of Tasmania’s social challenges, including high rates of poverty, could be attributed to the lower level of educational attainment compared to other states.

While he did not wish to enter the ELs debate he did... believe that improving the quantity and quality of education received by Tasmania’s children ought to be an integral part of any long term strategy aimed at reducing poverty and deprivation in Tasmania.

The state government launched an $165,000 advertising campaign to sell Tasmania’s controversial Essential Learnings curriculum. The Education Minister advised that the campaign’s focus was to reassure parents their children were still learning the basics. We got the message loudly and clearly from members of the community and commentators that we needed to get a clearer message out there. . . the advertisements also correct some of the myths about Essential Learnings that a few critics have perpetuated. The Union suggested that the Minister could have saved money by beginning the campaign some 18 months ago.

In an article on 19 December the New Education Department head John Smyth said he may give staff copies of Frank McCourt’s new memoir ‘Teacher Man’ to improve their communication skills, also saying that the department must improve the way it communicates with the community about ELs. John Smyth was reported as saying, I’ve been hugely impressed by what's happening in schools. I’m very comfortable with ELs. The learning kids are getting really develops their thinking. I think we’ll see very different young people coming out of our schools who really can think and challenge and manage and live in what is an increasingly complex and challenging world. As more and more children move through Essential Learnings and become real thinkers they will really contribute to this state. Mr Smyth encouraged parents to respond to the Tasmanian State School Parents and Friends survey on ELs reports to be issued at the start of the new year.

Inherent in the articles written in support for or against the Essential Learnings curriculum is an emerging list of public purposes of education which includes:

- Ensuring students learn the basics of reading, writing and mathematics,
- Tailoring learning to suit individual needs,
- Connecting learning in schools with learning outside schools,
• Students thinking about learning,
• Students engaging with each other in the learning process,
• Thinking independently with an emphasis on ideas and creativity,
• Students being ethical in their behaviour,
• Help students achieve fuller, more successful and, yes, more rewarding lives
• Improving education levels of students as a means of, or strategy for, reducing poverty in the community

4.3.7 Student reports

Report writing was the second major issue to dominate the press during 2005, commencing in January and progressively building up a head of steam until erupting in September. The first article in January proved to be indicative of what was to come.

The Schools Guide in the Mercury on 18 Jan 2005 advised that the Year 10 Assessment Report would show achievement against five of the key outcomes of the ELs (Being literate, Being numerate, Maintaining Well-being, Thinking inquiry with Being information-literate to be reported on in 2006), replacing the Tasmanian Certificate of Education.

The opposition spokesman on education expressed concern that reports sent home were one-line reports and next to useless. The Minister for Education advised that the new ELs reporting system would not come into effect until the end of the year. The AEU expressed concern about the changes in assessment, saying that the Essential Learnings program had been introduced to schools at a staggered pace over the past five years. This year the changes became mandatory across all schools. In those schools where the changes were new, many teachers felt confused. . . most teachers are happy with the curriculum but those who came on-line most recently say they want more time to understand and feel comfortable with the assessment and reporting.

On Wednesday 18 May it was reported that the Minister for Education announced that schools now had an extra year to report on the Key element, Inquiry. The extension meant that the entire 18 reporting elements due to be implemented by 2008 will not be fully implemented till 2009.

The Liberal Party called for standardised school reports after receiving complaints from schools. These school reports provide no information whatsoever on the performance of an individual child and are no more than a mail-merged document. The Union president said the reports may have looked vague and caused some confusion for parents. Under the new curriculum the end-of-year report would not assess traditional areas.

A poll conducted by the Education Union asked teachers whether they felt ready to assess students using key elements of the new curriculum. Minister Wriedt questioned the polls integrity as a...
yes/no answer was the only option to the question: ‘Are you ready to assess on reporting, yes or no? The Liberal spokesperson said that teacher concerns were not being met.

Different requirements by state and federal governments could result in two different reports for children, the AEU says. Teachers feared bearing the brunt of the extra paperwork created by the conflict over easy-to-read report cards. Dr Nelson’s insistence on report cards marked from A to E against the eight core learning areas, such as maths and English, poses a problem for Tasmanian teachers who must mark students against the ELs by the end of this year. Reporting twice for every student is a tremendous amount of work and quite frankly teachers won’t do it. The AEU would continue to seek a compromise.

On 29 July it was reported by Nick Clarke that four southern high schools had major problems issuing half year reports because the computer software (SARIS) at the centre of the new ELs curriculum had crashed. It was understood that major changes would be made to the software would be tested and made available to schools on the following Tuesday.

The Education Minister launched information packs that would explain to parents what the new ELs curriculum is and what reports would look like. The original report card put forward by Tasmania did not meet the requirements set by Federal Education Minister Nelson for schools to produce plain English reports that were simple for parents to read. As federal education funding was dependent on the states adhering to Dr Nelson’s guidelines the Tasmanian Minister had been in negotiations with him over what the final form of the reports would take. The AEU’s main concern was that teachers at some schools still felt that they had not been given adequate time and assistance in preparing to report under ELs at the end of this year. They’ve had less time than the others, she said.

The federal education minister reiterated his determination to have a plain language report card for Tasmanian students during his visit to Hobart. He threatened that $341 million worth of federal schools funding could be affected if a suitable report card was not issued. He said the report card should have a grading of A, B, C, D, E for each student in each subject. We want to know in which quartile in performance in a particular subject a student fails . . .

How Tasmania reports to parents is its business so long as it also reports that if it wants $350 million of government funding over four years, it will report in plain language. Negotiations with the state were continuing.

Ms Wriedt said she still hoped to negotiate with Dr Nelson over the format of Tasmania’s report cards but the AEU’s Chris Lane was less optimistic. Mr Lane said, “Reporting twice for every student is a tremendous amount of work and quite frankly teachers won’t do it.” However, he said they would continue to seek a compromise. A compromise was announced in the Mercury on 25 August 2005. In addition to assessment against the new Essential Learnings criteria, state school report cards would include equivalent marks in A-E format commencing in 2006. Department of Education Acting Deputy Secretary, David Hanlon, said teachers would still mark students against ELs and the department would then convert those marks into ABCDE equivalents, ensuring statewide consistency and no added workload for teachers. Tasmanian State School Parents and Friends President Jenny Branch was unimpressed saying the new reports would probably still confuse parents—I’m not convinced it’s a fair way to report on children’s learning. The AEU was
pleased the change meant no extra work for teachers but said, ... parents would still need to be informed about how to read the dual reporting systems.

September saw a dramatic increase in the reporting of the ELs assessment process and the reporting of student progress to parents. A draft copy of the Essential Learnings report card drew major criticism from language expert Don Watson who analysed the Education Department’s spiel about providing for student assessment against a set of ‘key element outcomes’. ... Anyone who use, ‘key element outcomes’ isn’t thinking properly. No-one is ever going to know what a set of key outcomes is. If you are going to talk about key element outcomes, do us a favour and tell us what one looks like. Peter Gutwein MHA highlighted the difficulty of the language used by reading a section of the report card in parliament, Teachers will collaborate to record student progress on each key element at a point on a continuum consisting of five standards. Common progression of statements which describes each student’s acquired skills and understandings are provided at each point of continuum for each key element. (Brochures concerning the report card had been outsourced by the Department of Education. The language in these proved to be unacceptable to commentators. The original pamphlets prepared by departmental officers had not created any problems.)

It’s language not unlike Stalinist language in being totally abstract. It’s hung from some invented framework – Watson said. Watson proceeded to destroy the credibility of the Education Department in using a foreign jargon to explain its new Essential Learnings curriculum. The opposition education spokesperson said Mr Watson was correct.

Acting department secretary Alison Jacob said the brochures were one way the department was endeavouring to inform parents about the new curriculum. Ms Jacob said, Terms such as ‘key elements’, which describe important parts of the curriculum, have been publicised and referred to in newsletters, parent forums and earlier brochures since 2001.

The Mercury Editorial added to the debate by stating that, Every generation, parents lament the fact that they don’t understand what the kids are saying. Now they’re also bound to be lost for words when trying to understand Education Minister Paula Wriedt’s Essential Learnings curriculum. ‘Key element outcomes’, ‘on balance judgment’ and ‘culminating performance’ are going to leave parents, not to mention students, feeling they’ve been left off the ‘concept map’. ... School never used to be this hard when we were content with plain English.

The next day reporter Low Choy quoted University of Queensland’s applied language studies professor, Roly Sussex as saying that most parents would find the Jargon Buster unintelligible – There needs to be a jargon buster to explain what’s in the jargon buster. ... if you have a five year old saying ‘Mummy my culminating performance was such and such’ that’s not good.

Opposition spokesman said that the language used in the jargon buster is the same, corporate, bureaucratic language used in most of the other ELs reporting system.

- The explanation of such terms as ‘rubric’, ‘formative assessment’ and ‘on balance judgment’ are filled with language that drones on and no parent could expect to gain a significantly clearer understanding of these terms after reading the jargon buster.
On the same day the Mercury published extracts from the Jargonbuster which included explanations of words frequently used in assessing student progress such as: ‘concept map’, and ‘on balance’.

The following day it was reported that Federal Education Minister Nelson had lampooned the ELs in parliament. – You cannot consult the community in this language because the community does not speak it. You might as well talk in Swahili.

Also, on 9 September, reporter Low Choy had two articles on page 3 that again, focussed on the use of language by the Education Department. Acting secretary Alison Jacob says the department accepts criticism it has received this week. She says, . . . we’ve really, in good faith, tried to communicate well and we really do genuinely want to do that. If we’re missing the boat on that we would want to get other advice. . . . there is always tension between professional language and plain English. The president of the Tasmanian State School Parents and Friends Association said she had heard from many parents who did not understand the language used . . . some parents get really upset because they want to communicate with students about what’s going on, and if you can’t understand how do you talk to your child.

The acting executive director of curriculum standards and support, Penny Andersen, explained the terms ‘rubric’ and ‘on balance judgment’ to the reporter. Then the Mercury placed Ms Jacob on the spot by asking her to ‘take a shot’ at explaining a concept map. Whilst the Acting Secretary explained that it was more appropriate to explain the term within the context of a conversation about ELs. The reporter persisted with, But parents don’t get context. When Johnny comes home and mentions a context map they don’t have this whole “framework”, as you call it to look at. They just want to know what a concept map is. [Ms Andersen steps in to explain on Ms Jacobs behalf that it was just a map of concepts – I’m not sure there’s any other way you can explain it.] The article went on to explain the background to the jargonbuster.

The Mercury reported that Tasmania’s business community does not understand the Education Department’s new Essential Learnings report cards. – two of the state’s top human resources firms say the reports do not make sense to employers. One said, – A framework that does not indicate whether a potential employee can read, write and add up is of little benefit to their daily business operations. The other is reported to have said, they make it harder to differentiate between people by not awarding recognisable grades. The Acting Deputy Secretary of Education David Hanlon said that the Tasmanian Chamber of Commerce and Industry had been involved in the development of the ELs – They continue to be consulted on curriculum changes, particularly assessment and reporting. There has been a positive response from employers on these matters and recently 30 employers and employer groups gave overwhelming positive feedback about reporting.

A report on 21 September focussed on the use of language once more. In this the Minister of Education admitted that the jargonbuster was ‘completely unhelpful’ for parents and acknowledged that the Education Department’s communications with parents could have been ‘a whole lot clearer’. Following several interchanges between members of state parliament Ms Wriedt, that there will be a more concerted effort to use clearer language in all documents used to communicate with school communities. It was acknowledged in the article that Ms Wriedt was on annual leave while the jargonbuster debacle played out. However, it was revealed by her
husband in the *Mercury* during 2007 that Ms Wriedt was suffering quite badly from post-natal depression during this period.

On 10 October 2005 the Tasmanian Parents and Friends Association were reported as saying that they would survey parents as soon as school resumed in 2006 seeking parents’ opinions on the new ELs report cards as they will have received their first student report at the end of 2005. However, the liberals still held some major concerns about the reports.

Parents were advised that students would receive two report cards at the end of the year. One would be a full report marking Essential Learnings and done by teachers. The other so-called ‘Nelson plain-English report’ required by Federal Education Minister Brendan Nelson – rate each student A,B,C,D, or E depending how they performed on each ELs area. This report would be generated by Department of Education computers. The AEU president said the Department and the union had come to an agreement. She said, *We believe whatever difficulties we’ve had with the time lines assessing and reporting ELs, it’s a far more educationally sound process than the Nelson requirements. Marking students in such a simplistic way had ended many years ago and had limitations. For example, putting the same student always in the bottom quartile would tell a parent little about the child’s performance.*

Opposition spokesman Peter Gutwein raised the issue that teachers were taking sick days in order to write their reports saying how confusing and difficult it was for teachers to write their student reports. Education Minister Wriedt did not deny the allegations about teachers taking sick leave, and said they had been given unprecedented support on the new assessment and reporting process. She said it had always been recognised that additional support for teachers would be required in the first year. Ms Wriedt said $4 million had been invested in laptops to help with assessment and reporting. Reporting was back in the headlines on 25 November with the *Mercury* reporting that technical glitches and long hours of overtime had hit Tasmanian public schools as they prepared to send the first Essential Learnings reports home. Information packs would be sent home with each report. The Liberal education spokesman said the sample reports released by Ms Wriedt showed she still did not understand the concept of easy-to-read, meaningful school reports.

Serious issues arose in December when the Department of Education generated A-E reports showed inconsistencies in the report of students between the A-E reports and the ELs reports prepared by teachers. Office of Educational Review director Jenny Gale said the department’s concern was to ensure consistency. *There might be the odd teacher here or there whose ideas about a particular standard for a particular group may be different from what is set.* However, a teacher at one Hobart primary school said most of the staff at her school had been told to rewrite their comments to more closely reflect the A-E marks – *The whole things a mess, the left hand doesn’t know what the right is doing in the department. Sometimes the left doesn’t even know the right exists.* It was reported that the Union had been told of teachers working up to 78 hours a week to complete their ELs reports. The Liberals expressed concern that most school reports would rate students with a ‘C’ and was
equally concerned that some parents had received advice from schools saying that ‘this report does not indicate the progress made’. Ms Collins, a Labor candidate at the state election said her greatest concern was ‘the sliding continuum’. A black dot charts a child’s progress on a scale with five ‘standards’, each divided into three levels. - I have no idea what the black dot means, to be blunt, to use straight language. But Ms Wriedt said the significance of the ‘dot’ was clearly spelt out in the accompanying material.

The final article on school reports for 2005 claimed that, according to the opposition, parents had been dumbfounded by their first look at school reports under the new Essential Learnings curriculum. I can’t see any possibility of any employer obtaining any useful information from the new Year 10 graduation certificate, Mr Gutwein said. The Tasmanian Chamber of Commerce and Industry employment education training also criticised the report and certificate formats. – The Essential Learnings does reflect the valuable skills that employers are looking for, but we can’t tell from these reports and certificates. But Education Minister Wriedt said the certificates had been developed after wide consultation with employers.

4.3.8 2006

There were fifty two articles about the Essential Learnings curriculum and related matters published by the Mercury in 2006. The articles were grouped under four themes that will be detailed in the following notes. Ten articles were concerned with the ongoing issue of the appropriateness of student reporting formats, eight related to the state election, including articles on thinking democratically related to school programs, and the change in the Tasmanian Education Minister. five articles focussed on the Essential Learnings curriculum and 29 articles addressed reforms that emerged under a new minister and (See chart 4.4).

Chart 4.4

Fifteen reporters contributed articles on education. Most articles published in the Mercury, during 2006, were attributed to Grube (11), Duncan (10) and a further 10 for which the author was unknown (See chart 4.5). Low Choy, who wrote so prolifically in 2005 had the one article published in 2006.
In July 2006, three months after taking office Education Minister Bartlett announced the demise of ELs and several reforms to curriculum and the structure of the Education Department. The resultant increase in *Mercury* reporting, due to the reforms, is evident in Chart 4.6.

The first article for 2006, on 17 January advised readers that, for the first time, parents will get reports that shows the progress their child makes from one year to the next. The Essential Learnings reports track a students progress over time. On 31 March the *Mercury* reported that jargon and poor
communications are expected to be the main issues identified by a survey of parents about Essential Learnings school reports. Parents and Friends president Jenny Branch reported hundreds of responses from across the state were received and were being collated. Australian Education Union president Jean Walker said that the survey concerns of teachers. – Anecdotally, I hear parents are very impressed with teachers’ comments but not so impressed with dots on the grid. Education Minister Paula Wriedt conceded that public concerns over the ELs may have cost her votes in the recent election.

The *Mercury* reported that parents would push for changes to the ELs report card, following analysis of 1200 surveys. Parents and Friends (P&F) would urge the new, incoming Minister for Education to alter the ELs reports. The state government had agreed to union and parents requests to slow the implementation of ELs reporting of student progress.

The P&F review found the ELs reports to be too jargon-filled and do not give parents a good idea of how children are progressing. Most parents agreed the reports were easy to understand and showed what was to be expected of students at their year level, but did not show parents what their child was able to do and could better identify areas where help was needed.

Minister Bartlett set up a special reporting to parents task force under the chairmanship of Education Secretary John Smyth. Included on the task force were the P&F president and the language commentator Don Watson. It will present its findings to the Minister on November 30.

On 21 June the *Mercury* Editorial headline read, ‘Elementary, my dear Watson’ with the editorial praising the appointment of Watson to the report task force. It went on to say that the appointment of Mr Watson would bring to the task force his view that if the department wants the public and teachers to accept its ideas, it should have the courage to present them in understandable English. It advised that the make-up of the panel was 2 parents, the P&F president and three teachers and suggested that there was an omission of students from the group. On the same day the *Mercury* carried an article by Kathy Grube which made similar comments about the appropriateness of appointing Mr Watson to the report task force.

P&F president Jenny Branch advised parents that they could opt out of the A-E report cards. She thought the task force may recommend the remodelling of the reports into one report. Jenny Gale from the Education Department’s Office of Educational Review said that A-E reports would be sent to parents on 31 July and would include comments on all graded criteria.

A report in the *Mercury* on 27 December 2006 claimed that as the Minister for Education had not yet approved the recommendations of the Reporting to Parents Taskforce, the task force had to do better. It said that while the emphasis is on the primacy of simple language and clarity of school
communication in school reports, inadequate attention has been given to early diagnostic assessment of student achievement. It claimed also that . . . the standard bar as shown in the report is confusing and utterly unspecific in terms of where a child’s actual achievement lies . . . progressions are a jargonised expression for not being able to determine what a child has learnt and his or her specific level of achievement at a given moment.

Reporting to parents had remained a high profile issue of concern for two years!

4.3.9 State election

The Tasmanian state election was held in March 2006. In the lead-up to the election several newspaper reports focussed on activities in schools that were an enactment of one of the key elements in the ELs curriculum, ‘Thinking democratically’. Schools can observe democracy at work as politicians try to convince electors that they have the best policies. Democratic principles are at work as teachers create classrooms where all students see themselves as integral to everyday decision making processes. As well as stimulating classroom discussion on politics, politicians and the idiosyncrasies of Tasmania’s Hare-Clark system, students learn the vocabulary needed to discuss the voting procedures and the make-up of parliament.

Greg Barnes in his political comment on the candidates for seats in southern Tasmanian electorates praised the Minister for Education, Paula Wriedt, who has ... proved a highly capable minister for education who has stood firm against vested interests and conservatives to pursue a world’s best practice Essential Learnings framework. The minister, however, struggled to retain her seat. It was reported that it was possible that controversy surrounding the new Essential Learnings school curriculum may have contributed to her drop in popularity. Ten days after the election Wriedt was declared elected but lost the education portfolio and would assume responsibilities for tourism, arts and heritage. On 6 April the make-up of the new cabinet was announced by Premier Paul Lennon with Paula Wriedt confirmed in the tourism, arts and heritage portfolio and David Bartlett in education. It was reported that Mr Bartlett takes on education at a time when there is still concern about the ground breaking Essential Learnings curriculum and education standards generally. He has to do the job begun by Paula Wriedt and break new ground.

4.3.10 The Essential Learnings curriculum

A very positive article on the ELs curriculum appeared in the Mercury’s Schools’ Guide saying that the curriculum is designed to equip students with skills for a lifetime of learning experience. Whilst the ELs was being used in all government schools from kindergarten to year 10 many Catholic and Independent schools were also using the ELs. The article said The ELs is about hands-on real life learning. It’s about engaging students and equipping them with skills, understanding and values so that they can apply what they are learning to their life and experiences.

The Mercury reported that at least 3000 students appeared to have left the government system in favour of Catholic and Independent schools. The figures are understood to have jolted the state government. It is understood the controversy over the Essential Learnings curriculum introduced into state schools last year by former Labor Education Minister Paula Wriedt, is blamed in part for pushing parents towards independent private schools. New
Education Minister David Bartlett was expected to launch a drive to restore public confidence in the state education system.

On 11 August the *Mercury* foreshadowed the release of results from the AEU survey of state school teachers on the Essential Learnings Curriculum, saying that feedback had been received from 90 per cent of schools. On 26 August it was reported that the Education Minister refused to provide the full survey results.

AEU President Jean Walker said, *The general opinion of teachers is that there are many good things about the Essential Learnings curriculum that they want to retain, but they are also telling us that they want a reduction in the work load in the assessment and reporting requirements. Teachers saw the assessment and reporting needed to be greatly simplified, made clearer, less jargonistic and less onerous. They believe that the number of key element outcomes need to be reduced and that the standards and progression statements need greater clarity and need simplifying and reducing. They also believe there is a need for a greater number of gradations in assessment to more accurately represent student progress.*

In September 2006 it was reported that while the education minister might have yielded to public criticism by scrapping the Essential Learnings there are many students who support the outcomes based curriculum. Students at Clarence High School study Essential Learnings subjects such as world futures, global inquiry, futures inquiry and well being as well as traditionally named English, mathematics and science subjects. Comments of students included: *… teaching is focussed on the understanding of how something works. … every thing is integrated. … we know where we are going and have developed goals. … linking mathematical theory to the real world is essential. … in Wellbeing we learn the theory of how teams work together … rubrics list in dot points what you have achieved at that standard for that piece of work. … the same standards are being used to mark students from kindergarten to year 10.*

Further articles reported on the Essential Learnings curriculum however, these were within the context of the new reform process being undertaken by the Minister for Education David Bartlett.

### 4.3.11 Education reform

The Minister for Education announced that the ELs would be dumped, less than two years after it was introduced to all schools, at the beginning of the following year (2007). His Deputy Secretary David Hanlon did not rule out a return to the traditional subjects of maths and English. Mr Bartlett said his department head John Smyth and some principals had already begun work on ‘Tasmania’s curriculum” to replace ELs. He promised the result would radically simplify the language and the framework but was reluctant to concede ELs had been scrapped. The *Mercury* Editorial, the next day (1 July), placed some levity on the situation when it quoted a joke doing the rounds of school staffrooms on 2006 – *What’s the best things about Christmas holidays? No ELs.* The article did say that, *adding to the confusion, the ELs had been implemented in the midst of a wider national curriculum debate between the traditionalists and the reformers. It has become a political battle ground and the conservative Federal Government has insisted on its own assessment process. … The farcical situation and the competing philosophies has to be resolved.*
Chief reporter Sue Neales when reporting major hits on the government during Budget Estimates hearings wrote (on 1 July) that there was the extraordinary revelation of his own volition on Thursday by the increasingly cocky Education Minister David Bartlett, that the controversial $20 million Essential Learnings school curriculum was to be scrapped. It was a bold announcement, . . . unfortunately spoiled by an unnecessary-arrogant swipe at the poor performance of his equally-dedicated predecessor and colleague Paula Wriedt. Also on 1 July, Philippa Duncan reported the concerns of the Vice President of the AEU, who said, teachers had held meetings for the past four years coming to grips with the ELs. Weekly planning meetings have been held across the state. Teachers would find the change frustrating and some older teachers might ask: ‘What’s the next thing David Bartlett will be doing?’ . . . Teachers have been ignored for political expedience. Opposition education spokesman, Peter Gutwein said the education of Tasmanian children had suffered during the failed ELs experiment and criticised the Union for not speaking out sooner. The Mercury reported that the Catholic education sector supported the review of Essential Learnings. The state director looked forward working with Mr Bartlett to develop a more user-friendly curriculum. On 5 July College principals from all sectors of education in Tasmania met to the Post Year 10 Curriculum Framework – still based on subjects but with three additional components – Personal pathways, Extended Studies and Working Within Communities. Also on 5 July, Philippa Duncan reported David Bartlett had tried to mend his relationship with predecessor Paula Wriedt after saying she had ‘not done a very good job’.

Greg Barnes asked, *What is it about Tasmania? Because a well-known author, a few school teachers, conservative politicians and a government gang up on a major reform, we adjudge it to be a failure. The attempt by the Education Minister, David Bartlett and, and his colleagues is a case of popularism and lack of leadership. . . . If Mr Bartlett and the Lennon government had wanted to show genuine leadership in education policy, then they would have continued to implement what would have been the most far-sighted and much needed reform to education in Australia. What has been disturbing about the events of the past fortnight is that education has been viewed as a commodity, an object or product that can be marketed to consumers. ELs is simply one product on the supermarket shelf and it’s going to be replaced by a parochial and dumbed down Tasmanian curriculum. . . . If technical terminology is the only criticism of ELs then simply reduce its impact, but don’t abandon the term ELs and the heart of the philosophy underpinning it.

The Mercury reported that David Bartlett had renewed a commitment to take on board the findings from the AEU survey of teachers.

Reporter Bantick foreshadowed the release of the discussion paper on the new Tasmanian curriculum. He advised that Minister Bartlett may be prudent to return to the readily defined and understood traditional subject definitions. There are more advantages in going this way than ameliorating public concern. A traditional curriculum focus would help to restore employer surety about the standards Tasmanian children attain. English and maths in particular, offered in a formal way, would better prepare students for the national benchmark assessment and reduce difficulties in comparing Tasmanian students on the benchmarks for literacy and numeracy.

One hundred days after taking over as Education Minister, David Bartlett’s mission, reported Kathy Grube (14 July), was to get more money through the school gate. The plan redirects
resources from the department’s head office straight into schools and gives principals more strategic leadership and control over how resources are spent. It will involve a significant number of staff at the department’s head office being deployed to schools or school support units. The restructure will see the three school branches replaced with four ‘Learning service units’. Elements of the reform were the subject of Philippa Duncan’s article the following day. Restoring power to school principals is the thrust of a back to basics plan... will send 150 bureaucrats back to Tasmania’s state schools – not to the classroom to teach... schools will be more business-like and have to answer to boards of principals rather than distant bureaucrats... corporate benchmarking will be used to measure how schools are going and direct resources to those not up to scratch... it was time for educators to lead reform, which he promised would cause minimum disruption in schools... an ‘organic network’ will replace a top-down hierarchical structure... the eighteen month restructure would be called ‘Student at the centre’.

It was rather ironic that the Mercury reported (17 July) that an Education Department paper on the proposed Student at the Centre restructure is so bureaucratic the teachers union cannot translate it. The AEU said the paper was, elitist, confusing and written in a language ordinary people would not understand. Peter Gutwein said the language was bizarre and overly complex. ... why can’t it just say learning services groups will support schools to support students?

Parents, however, say (Grube 19 July) they have no trouble understanding the language in Bartlett’s plan for restructuring his department.

When interviewed by Christopher Bantick, David Bartlett acknowledged that he was a politician in a hurry. During the interview the Minister said there were three areas that he wanted to improve: Firstly there is the early pre-school years. I want every Tasmanian kid to arrive as a learner. Secondly, we need to improve our literacy and numeracy standards in the middle years, particularly from years 5 to 9... I think there’s a gap and we need to get this right. The third area is the post year 10 retention rates. We have the worst in the country and there is no way of avoiding that. During the interview he made the following comment on school performance: If a school wasn’t performing even when it had resources and support, would it be closed and amalgamated with a more successful school? Only if it was led by the school community. ... not succeeding is not an option - - not for me but for the future of our schools. People have accused me of being in a hurry. I am in a hurry. There’s no job second to learning. There are 70,000 kids in our schools who deserve the best.

Kathy Grube reported that the Tasmanian State Schools Parents and Friends Association intended to put a motion at their annual conference to eliminate student free days. The AEU said the student free days were used to provide time to train teachers in the ELs curriculum.

The major findings of the survey on the ELs conducted by the AEU were released in a joint press conference by the AEU President and the Minister for Education but they refused to provide the full survey results. The AEU President said the union executive had agreed not to make the survey results public because raw data could be ‘confusing and misrepresented and misrepresented’. She said, 90 per cent of government schools said they found ELs a ‘useful approach’ but said the workload of assessment and reporting was too much. She went on to say, “The general opinion of teachers is that there are many good things with the Essential Learnings curriculum that they want to retain, but they are also telling us that they want a reduction in the workload in the assessment and reporting requirements.”
Within four days (although the Minister had given a commitment, reported on July 10, to take on board the views of teachers (in the AEU survey) before embarking on any major changes to the ELs curriculum framework). The Mercury reported that David Bartlett released the Tasmania Curriculum to replace the ELs curriculum.

Traditional subjects including history and the arts will be compulsory in all state high schools from the beginning of 2007. The Tasmanian curriculum entrenches the traditional subjects of maths, English, science and technology. History, personal development and information and communication technology make up the seven compulsory subjects. The eighteen key elements of ELs that had included acting democratically, maintaining wellbeing and building social capital had been axed. State School P&F President, Jenny Branch said the curriculum would give teachers more time in the classroom but was concerned that some teachers would return to nineteenth century teaching methods.

On 1 September the Mercury reported that, according to the Dean of Education, abolishing the Essential Learnings curriculum will not have a significant effect on the training of teachers. Trainee teachers studied the curricula of mainland states and overseas countries in addition to Tasmania’s curriculum. On 2 September an article on Clarence High School indicated that they had endorsed the proposed curriculum changes stating that Changing our programs to best meet the needs of our students is an ongoing and evolving process. Our decisions will always be made with the student being placed at the centre of the learning.

Minister Bartlett promised that student literacy and numeracy skills will improve under his watch. I accept anecdotally there will always be people arriving as job starters without the literacy and numeracy rates that industry requires – we want to fix that problem. Opposition spokesman, Peter Gutwein said the government needed to reduce class sizes, improve year seven results and provide more resources and support for teachers.

Tasmania’s Education Minister said the call by the Federal Minister for Education, Julie Bishop for a national curriculum was unnecessary. It was reported that Ms Bishop’s call sparked an angry response from premiers due to her statement that schools had been hijacked by trendy, left-wing education departments – she said it was time for a back-to-basics curriculum set by a board of studies. – states were wasting $180 million on duplication. The AEU branded Ms Bishop’s comments as insulting and ill-informed.

Mr Bartlett said that, my visits to over 100 schools have clearly shown me that it is excellence in teaching that makes a difference in kid’s lives, not an ideological or theoretical debate about curriculum . . . we need to be looking at universities and the sorts of skills and knowledge they are providing student teachers . . . we must continue to raise literacy standards across Australia.

Education bureaucrats, reported Kathy Grube, have not been told whether they will be relocated as part of the department’s restructure, four months after the changes were announced. The Community and Public Sector Union said, no-one knows how the plan will be carried out and how it will affect them. The Education Department Secretary said the department was actively working to identify staff, functions and resources that are best to work in and closer to schools. – The eighteen month implementation phase will ensure that changes are made at the right time so that we continue to support the work of schools during the transition to the Learning Services groups.
4.3.12 2007 January to June

The summary of education articles in the *Mercury* newspaper concludes on 30 June 2007. There were 8 reports in this half of the year. Two articles prior to the start of the 2007 school year outlined the Tasmania curriculum and the rebuilding of trust and respect in departmental processes by teachers. There were no articles linked to ELs until June 2007 when six of the 8 articles for 2007 were published. The first fore shadowed a leadership crisis in schools as more principals were expected to retire and the other five focussed on reform in the senior secondary sector.

Chart 4.7

The article on 23 January reinforced the notion that the refined Tasmanian Curriculum would be simpler, easier to understand and easier to report on than the Essential Learnings. The new curriculum assessment procedures distinguished between primary and secondary education. An outline of the curriculum and assessment procedures followed.

The editorial on 16 February, following the start of the new year, expressed the need to rebuild confidence in the system and lift standards after years of upheaval. It went on to say that some teachers had yet to be placed in schools and there had been rumours of school closures which had a few communities on edge, and that school reports were still not jargon-free. There were favourable comments on the announcement that the Tasmanian Certificate of Education will set minimum standards for literacy, maths and computer skills. Despite the difficulties mentioned the editorial said there were reasons for optimism.

Tasmania’s Professor Bill Mulford who is part of a study of successful school principals was featured on 20 June, was reported as saying that students could suffer unless something positive
was done to replace and retain principals. He said it was a critical
time in education with the latest raft of changes about to begin. Too
much change is coming from the top down. We thought Tasmania
would’ve learned from the [failed ELs curriculum] that it won’t work
if it keeps coming from the top down and you don’t involve leaders in
the schools. Nothing aborts an ambitious school improvement effort,
we now know, faster than a change in principal.

Education Minister Bartlett is reported as supporting the study and said enhancing school
leadership was a priority. He affirmed that he would be consulting with the Parents and Friends
Association, the Tasmanian Principals Association and the AEU. He wanted principals to
provide support wisdom and leadership.

The Minister’s pledge to consult was short-lived as on 22 June he
announced a reform of senior secondary reform in the state. It was
reported that educators were stunned at the lack of information
available about the Tasmania Tomorrow project announced in the
state budget. The AEU said many teachers had reacted with a
stunned numbness to the changes and were not convinced that the
changes would result in increased retention of students in years 11
and 12. The proposal would replace TAFE and senior secondary
colleges with academies and polytechnics.

The AEU voted to fight the structure. The Chairman of the College
Principals Group said some issues would need to be addressed before
the model gained the support of principals as they had to ensure that the needs of all students
would be met. The Minister reiterated that he wanted to see retention rates improved and
promised to consult with teachers. The AEU claimed that the changes were not based on
authoritative research. The State Opposition Leader questioned whether the reforms would
become ELs Mark II. Tasmanian Greens education spokesman said reports that morale of
teachers had never been lower among teachers and support staff could not be ignored.

The Editorial on 28 June opened with the statement that Education
Minister David Bartlett says he will consult widely before
restructuring Tasmanian Senior secondary schools in 2009. –It is a
pity that he did not start before the radical overhaul was announced
with a flourish in the State Budget this month. The scale of the
transformation came as a complete surprise to most in the education system. . . teachers are
still recovering after the debacle of the Essential Learnings curriculum . . . When Mr Bartlett
became Minister 15 months ago, he promised breathing space, a chance for the system to settle
down after the ELs upheavals. He said he would be open to consult . . . the only way Mr
Bartlett can win people over is by involving them in the process. The department and schools
are full of people passionate about the education of Tasmanian students. It is an enormous
reserve of talent but to harness it fully, Mr Bartlett still has a lot of work to do.

The Secretary of Education outlined the plan for changes in senior
secondary education in an interview conducted by reporter Philippa
Duncan. As evidence that the changes would work the Secretary
pointed to the increase in the number of students gaining a post-
school qualification in New Zealand, Singapore, Finland and Ireland.

However, it was also reported on 30 June that The Education Department Secretary John Smyth
had met college principals and told them to keep quiet about concerns over his reforms.
Opposition education spokesperson Sue Napier said Education Minister David Bartlett had not
justified why TAFE should be dismantled. *There had been years of work go into making TAFE Tasmania a nationally recognised brand and the Minister would need to provide some pretty compelling reasons to get rid of it altogether. After the Essential Learnings debacle, there is a grave danger of teachers and students suffering reform overload.*

### 4.4. Lessons Learned

What has been learned about the role played by the media (specifically Hobart’s *Mercury* newspaper) in the public purposes of education (specifically the ELs curriculum with its strong focus on public purposes)? The seven areas to be covered in this section relate to the reporting on the ELs by the *Mercury*, the roles played by the Minister for Education, the Opposition spokesman on education and the Department of Education, the response of educators and parents and the impact of media reporting on the process of educational change.

**Mercury Reporting**

- Descriptive or factual articles about the Essential Learnings (ELs) curriculum, whether provided by the Department of education, schools or researched by reporters, were presented in the *Mercury* in a full and thorough manner and would likely to be most informative to the reader.

- When the *Mercury* was presenting issues that were negative towards the ELs, in particular the articles about issues to do with the reporting of student progress to parents, the reading public were continuously reminded of the negative nature of the issue as each new article contained reminders of “the story so far”. In this manner, the impression was given that the “issue” was growing, as it did in September 2005 until it reached fever pitch.

- The *Mercury*’s interest in reporting on the ELs gathered momentum following the mandating of the reporting process due to the conflicts that arose in school communities due to the language and content of reports and was fanned by the Federal Government’s insistence on A-E ratings in reports. The *Mercury* brought the issue to public attention which ultimately proved detrimental to the curriculum itself. It might be argued that it is the media’s role to raise issues in a public way whereas it is the Department of Education’s role to foresee issues, address them, and move on.

- The *Mercury* did not have a dedicated person to report on educational matters. One wonders whether the ‘story’ would have unfolded differently had the story of the ELs been before the public more often than just at ‘issue-time’. Articles during the six year period were attributed to 18 different reporters plus the Editor, non-attributed articles and letters to the editor. In 2005, 13 different writers contributed to ELs related articles. This is in stark contrast to the situation in Launceston in the north of Tasmania where the Examiner newspaper has dominance. The Examiner has for many years had a dedicated education reporter. The Department of Education Branch heads in the north of the state and a number of influential principals kept this education reporter fully informed about ELs and its implementation. The result was favourable reporting about ELs.

- An analysis of the content of the *Mercury*, ELs related articles identified four, main recurring themes: learning/schools guide, curriculum and assessment, reporting to parents, and school reform. The issue of reporting lead to a focus on the ELs curriculum, that in turn moved to school reform and the announcement of the Tasmania curriculum. The ELs and reporting to parents received similar amounts of attention by reporters in the *Mercury* during 2005 however, in 2006 and 2007 following the
appointment of a new Minister for Education, attention shifted to school reform. Comments relating to educational matters of concern, following analysis of the articles published, seem to be sourced from five key persons: the Minister for Education, the Opposition Spokesman on Education, The President of the AEU, The President of the Parents and Friends governing body, and Department of Education Officers. As stated previously, the Opposition Spokesman on education matters was instrumental in continually highlighting issues related to the ELs and reporting to parents thus keeping the issues uppermost in the reader’s eye.

• Three peak periods of reporting occurred during the period of this study: mandated assessment and reporting in October 2004, the language of reporting in September 2005, and school reform in July 2006. During these peak periods one might be forgiven for drawing the analogy of the ‘wounded animal’ (the ELs) with many non-education ‘hyenas’ (reporters) moving in for their ‘share of the kill’ (published articles) – a media frenzy!

• Letters to the Editor may not be indicative of the depth of feeling on an issue within a community as not all letters sent to the Editor are published. It is the Editor’s choice as to which letter is published. Feedback from Department of Education personnel, in positions attempting to limit the public debate on the reporting process, indicated to the researchers that they were aware of many teachers who wrote letters in support of the ELs to the Editor of the Mercury that were never published. Fourteen letters were published: ten in October 2004 following mandated reporting requirements on student progress and the change from subject-based curriculum, four in September 2005 regarding concern over the language used in reports, and six in July 2006 following the announcement of the Tasmania curriculum. Overall there were six letters in support of the ELs and 14 letters against.

Minister of Education

• This case study has demonstrated that it is of critical importance that Ministers and departments become proactive in addressing issues in the early stages of their development before they become issues of widespread public concern. This may include the Department hierarchy acknowledging that the issue does actually exist. The Minister of Education Paula Wriedt did try to reinforce the positive aspects of ELs in late September 2005 but this appeared to do little to diminish the number of articles on student reporting, as these continued well into October 2005.

• Additional research on the Minister for Education’s performance revealed that she had been on leave when the frenzy of Mercury articles on the reporting process began in September. As a consequence she joined the debate too late to make a difference, as the issue seemed to have gained a “life of its own”.

• Ministerial responses in early September were made by the Minister for Economic Development who was acting in the role and it became clear that she did not have any where near the intimate knowledge of the ELs as Ms Wriedt. In addition, in the early months of 2007 it was reported in the Mercury that Ms Wriedt was suffering severe post natal depression when issues relating to the reporting of ELs became uncontrollable. The Department of Education appeared to be ineffective in their efforts to support the Minister.

• It may be concluded that the Minister, in relation to the ELs, was “hung out to dry” by her Department, particularly as the issue of reporting to parents had commenced some eleven months previously. There is little evidence in the Mercury reporting that the Department of Education was seriously trying to assist the Minister or to address or manage the issue during that time.
Opposition spokesman

- The education spokesman for the Liberal Opposition Party, Peter Gutwein was consistently reported in the *Mercury* either raising issues concerning the ELs curriculum or responding to questions regarding issues raised by others. During 2005 there were 58 articles reporting on the ELs in the *Mercury*. Mr Gutwein was quoted in 18 articles during 2005 with 10 of those during September and October 2005. In November 2004 he foreshadowed 2005 being a “horror year for teachers coping with system restructuring arising from the Atelier Report” and the “one size fits all”, system mandated requirement for all teachers to report each student’s learning progress in the ELs irrespective of when a teacher (or school) commenced rolling out ELs in their classroom(s). It may well be, from the evidence contained within the ELs articles, that the Department of Education were, at best, tardy in addressing the issues raised by Mr Gutwein thus allowing debates to soar out of control.

Department of Education

- The Department of Education central office bureaucracy made limited responses to the issues raised by *Mercury* reporters which, following an analysis of the articles on the ELs, proved to be ineffectual in minimising the “fall-out” from these articles. There is little evidence in the *Mercury* articles of the Department of Education adopting a proactive stance on media related issues. While not all of their submissions to the *Mercury* may have been reported, it would be reasonable to say, on the available evidence, that they were found wanting on media issues.

Educators’ responses

- None of the bodies representing educators seemed to have the fortitude to ignore the gag on public servants speaking publicly, even where this would be in the best interests of the children of the state. The principals’ association responses, in relation to key items reported in the *Mercury*, were noticeable by their absence. The *Mercury* chose to publish one letter to the Editor from the TPA in October 2004 which was about backing for the new curriculum. That the principals were basically silent on the ELs would, in retrospect, seem to be a misjudgement both by the principals association and the Department of Education, especially given that they were the most favourably disposed of all those in schools to ELs (see following charts).

- The union took an industrial rather than a professional position in relation to ELs. This is difficult to reconcile with the union’s usually strong support for the public purposes of education.

The Australian Education Union (AEU), whilst generally supportive of the ELs, was consistently reported in the *Mercury* as having concerns about the ‘one-size-fits-all’ expectation on the part of the Department of Education in respect to all teachers needing to report student progress on the ELs curriculum irrespective of the time their school had been committed to changing from a subject based curriculum. The AEU polled its members in 2005 to ascertain school readiness to participate in the mandated reporting process. The readiness on the part of AEU members was found to be low. In primary schools a third of those who commenced in 2001 indicated they were ready to report compared with a sixth of those who commenced ELs in subsequent years. In secondary schools only a tenth of AEU members who commenced in all years indicated they were ready to report. Perhaps the results of the survey are indicative of the complexity of the changes in approaches to teaching under the ELs and, in teachers’ quest to develop their own understanding of the new curriculum, they perceived it would take much more time to be able to adequately report on student progress.
In 2006 the union undertook a survey of all of its teachers. 2635 responses were received which represented a 58 per cent response rate. Respondents were asked whether overall ELs has been a positive change for education in Tasmania. The Mean score was 2.69 (SD 1.31) on the five-point scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The statistically significant differences (t-tests, two-tailed, p < 0.05) among subgroups indicate (see the following chart) that the higher one’s role in the school and less experience the teacher the more favourable the response. Also Special schools responded more favourably when compared to district high, primary and early childhood schools with secondary schools responding least favourably. Other data indicated that within secondary schools there were concerns about the ELs curriculum from specialist/subject oriented teachers. Broader acceptance of the ELs curriculum by primary school teachers was reported by the AEU. However, forty seven per cent of teachers strongly disagreed that their workload since the ELs assessment and reporting began was reasonable. Fifty-two per cent of teachers responding to the survey indicated that they strongly disagreed with the proposition that reporting on the nine ELs elements by 2009 was a reasonable expectation. (Chart 8)

Chart 4.8

It is clear from the responses to other items that the system of reporting (Mean 1.40, SD 0.70) and the additional workload (Mean 1.93, SD 1.07) it created were the major reasons for this unfavourable response to ELs. As the following chart demonstrates, the statistically significant differences based on position, experience and type of school were repeated. These negative results to the mandated assessment and reporting system had been foreshadowed a year earlier in the smaller union survey referred to above. This survey found (Chart 4.9) that for both the effectiveness of the reporting and reasonableness of the workloads related to reporting the responses were very low and well below the mid-point on the scale. Within these low scores, those higher in the hierarchy (for example principals as opposed to teachers), those in Special or District High school as opposed to Primary and Secondary schools, and those with less as opposed to more experience had higher scores.

It is interesting to note that the results of the latter AEU survey were never made public with the union preferring to come to an agreement with the new Minister for
Education that in exchange for its silence ("The union executive had agreed not to make the survey results public because raw data could be ‘confusing and misrepresented and misquoted’" - *Mercury*, 26 August, 2006, p. 16) the union would be fully included in the decision making processes about the new curriculum. (The Minister’s actual public statement was: “I will be listening to the union and listening to classroom teachers and mapping a way forward.” *Mercury*, 26 August, 2006, p. 16.)

**Chart 4.9**

- Teachers in Tasmania are gagged and barred from speaking out publicly on issues of concern. *Mercury* reporting showed that the Department of Education Secretary, on two occasions, when a topic became of intense interest to the media, reminded teachers that under the Public Service provisions they were not permitted to speak publicly on any issue. One wonders whether or not history may have been different if teachers had been able to speak publicly in support of the ELs, or if there had been greater teacher participation in decision-making processes, i.e., through co-construction of appropriate models of student reports by teachers and appropriate personnel within the Department of Education.

**Parents response**
- The Tasmanian Parents and Friends Association’s response to the ELs story is quite limited in its scope. In 2004 the then president said the association supported the philosophy of the ELs. During 2005 parents made six contributions in *Mercury* articles on reporting student progress. They were concerned about the language used in the reports and found there was no correlation between the ELs reports and the Federal A-E rated reports. Parents had the initiative to survey parents views on the format used by the Department of Education to report on student progress and generally found it unsatisfactory. In 2006, Parents were reported in the *Mercury* as supporting Minister Bartlett’s plan to restructure schools into four Learning Services groups.

**The process of change**
- Implementing curriculum change can be problematic when inadequate time is provided to develop understanding in teachers to enable them to confidently adopt the
change, especially in respect of the ELs curriculum which was based around the fundamental shift from subjects to notions of thinking, enquiry, health and well-being. Most adults have experienced a school, particularly one using a subject and knowledge based curriculum, and have opinions as to what a school provides by way of education. This inevitably contributes to a constricted community view, including that of the media, of what schooling might be. At the end of 2004 all schools had varying depths of knowledge about the implementation of the ELs. Adding to the number of project schools had been an incremental process each year. In spite of the plan to work towards full implementation of the ELs in 2009, the mandate by the Department of Education that all schools would report on the ELs in 2005 made little sense and negated the good-will that had previously been established during a collaborative and inclusive process between the ELs consultation team and teachers in schools. The problem was compounded by the fact that a substantial number of schools had, to that point, had little or no time to become acquainted with the ELs. Had the assessment requirements been matched to the stage of implementation experienced by schools the difficulties that occurred in subsequent years may have been avoided.

- Change is on-going and becoming more frequent within Departments of Education. After a long period of stability, system changes have become more rapid in Tasmanian education. On top of the ELs and the issues relating to assessment and reporting, the structure of the Department of Education kept changing. The District model for managing groups of schools commenced in 1991 and continued with only superficial change until 2004. From the beginning of 2005 the Department of Education adopted a three Branch model supported by 26 school clusters within those branches. A new Minister of Education was appointed in April 2006 who announced another restructuring into four “Student at the Centre” Learning Centres. Associated with this new structure was the demise of the ELs curriculum following a six year introductory period, to be replaced by a subject oriented Tasmania Curriculum. Whilst the ELs themselves were subjected to very little criticism in the Mercury before the end of 2005, the language of reporting to parents did receive severe criticism. This, in turn lead to the ELs being questioned by some before being replaced by the Tasmania curriculum in 2006/2007. In 2007 the new Minister also announced changes to the senior secondary sector of education. The Mercury articles have consistently focussed on issues arising from what has been perceived as poor and inadequate communication and consultation between the Department, teachers, parents and the community. The new Minister does claim to be consultative, however the Editorial in the Mercury of June 28, 2007 seriously questions the Minister’s commitment to a consultative process. As our case study has indicated, unless communication and consultation are an integral part of the change process successful implementation is unlikely.

- Public and media concern increased dramatically when language used within the profession was not translated into language appropriate for the wider community. This was particularly so when the Department of Education expressed an intent to communicate with parents, employers and the populace in general. The use of everyday language would have helped demystify the proposed changes and been much more inclusive of the readership. The furore that arose in Mercury reporting during September 2005 did so because of the inappropriate language used by the Department of Education to report student progress on the ELs curriculum to parents. The Department of Education did publish a ‘jargon buster’ but there is no evidence in the Mercury reports that the ‘jargon buster’ helped alleviate the situation. There was confusion between what actually was “language of the profession” and “language for the wider community”.


4.5 Concluding comments

This section attempts to identify some outcomes derived from the study concerning the Essential Learnings curriculum, the process of curriculum change, assessment, reporting and the role of the *Mercury* and their impact on the public purposes of education. Unanswered questions are identified, together with some concluding remarks.

The Essential Learnings curriculum
- The Essential Learnings curriculum was developed around a set of clearly articulated public purposes employing a very public process of co-construction that were co-constructed by the Minister for Education, officers of the Department of Education, teachers, principals and parents with inputs from members of the wider community. Essential Learnings was developed as part of the State of Tasmania’s vision for education - Learning Together, which in turn was part of the State Government’s visionary, over-all plan for Tasmania – Tasmania Together.
- The Essential Learnings curriculum was a genuine attempt to provide an educational experience for students that was relevant to living in the Twenty-first Century, was inclusive of students and promoted many public purposes of education.
- It takes time to understand, let alone be able to assess and report on, the public purposes of education. The analysis of the articles published in the *Mercury* did little to build on that understanding.

The process of curriculum change
- The conclusion which could be drawn from reading the *Mercury* articles is that for change in education to be brought to a logical and successful completion it is essential for the Minister, Departmental heads, supporting officers and those in schools to move as one. This necessitates time being spent on developing ideas and sharing ideas. ELs commenced in such a manner but impatience on the part of the Department hierarchy and their move to mandate requirements at an inappropriate time was the major contributor to the demise of ELs. Moving forward with a common purpose could limit the emergence of major issues and being prone to high levels of media exposure.
- Continually restructuring departments of education may not, and have not realised the educational outcomes expected by the promoters of those changes, even though these met with a favourable response from the *Mercury* reporters. Changes look good and demonstrate to the public that something may be happening but may lead to some insecurity by teachers within the system. There is the often stated belief by teachers that if they waited long enough structures will revert to what they were, i.e., ‘what goes around comes around’. The ELs focus appeared to be about attitudinal change with an emphasis on improving teacher understanding of the art of teaching, particularly of the pedagogy, through high levels of collegiality, collaboration and cooperation. The ELs was a growing and living experience with teachers initially engaged in its co-construction. Much dialogue ensued as teachers teased out issues concerning what and how to teach. Contrast this with the recently distributed Tasmanian curriculum which was developed in six months by an “expert group”, then delivered to schools with an expectation that teachers were ready to pick up the Tasmanian curriculum and teach from the document. This is a much more simplistic approach and may superficially address recent issues concerning the curriculum but may not have the far reaching benefits promoted under the ELs. The level of teacher commitment to this new mandated curriculum may also be questioned over time. However, Ministers may be keen to be seen to be acting and, if recent experience is any guide, will not be around long enough to see let alone take responsibility for their top-down decisions!
- Analysis of the *Mercury* articles would indicate that, in contrast to the then Tasmanian Minister for Education, the Federal Government Minister supported a more conservative stance on educational matters, such as promoting traditional subjects such as English,
mathematics and history and reporting student progress through the use of A-E ratings. The Federal Government was prepared to withdraw Commonwealth funding from the state if it refused to co-operate. This placed at risk the move by Tasmania to develop an innovative, new curriculum based in the public purposes of education.

The *Mercury*
- The *Mercury* was conservative in its reporting of the ELs and actively promoted the return to a subject based curriculum following the appointment of a new Tasmanian Minister of Education.

Managing societal change
- The difficulty of managing institutional and societal change has been brought to the fore in this study of the *Mercury* and the publication of ELs related articles. In one sense it has demonstrated why the nature of schooling with its focus on knowledge-based subjects has been so difficult to change during the past one hundred and fifty years. Whilst the ELs offered promise and the chance to revitalise the secondary sector of education in which so many children are reported to be disaffected, the Tasmania curriculum has quickly reverted to a subject based curriculum, more traditional in its offerings and simplified to make it more acceptable for teachers, parents and employers. It may well take teachers with special attributes to maintain the ELs thrust of developing thinking, understanding and public purposes under such circumstances. It may be critical to focus on the ‘thinking of teachers’ as well as that of students and in so doing, realise greater potential for education and its public purposes.

Assessment and reporting
- Assessment and reporting of student progress of public purposes by teachers is difficult.

Unanswered questions
- This media case study has raised a number of questions that have been inadequately answered:
  - How is change in schooling to provide a greater focus on public purposes achieved when so many in the community see their school experience to be the appropriate way in which their children should be educated?
  - What can ministers’ departments do to better promote the public purposes of education?
  - Would education be better served if public service limitations were lifted and teachers and principals were encouraged to participate in a full and open debate about the public purposes of education and the merits of the curriculum used – that is, the process was as public as the purpose?
  - How can student progress, especially on the public purposes of education, be reported on in a way that is acceptable to the parents and employers?
  - On the assumption that the media does not accept any responsibility for the consequences of its reporting, is “managing the media” a critical part of the whole experience?
  - How much time is required in order to establish a sufficiently large critical mass that major changes such as ELs and its public purposes will continue?
  - What is the public purpose of the media?

In conclusion, ELs started with such promise for the public purposes of education and with the intent to revitalise pedagogy in a way that had never before been attempted. The early years were exemplary using a model of co-construction to great effect. Impatience on the part of the bureaucracy and a return to mandated, systems of control saw the ELs process quickly unravel.
Once problems surfaced, the ‘hyenas’, fanned by the media pounced, allowing the rather shaky commitment to the ELs by the bureaucracy, those who had not been part of the staged implementation process and certain groups of teachers, such as female teachers, those with more than 15 years experience and those in secondary schools, to quickly erode. Conservatism has ruled and the status quo has been maintained. Teachers who lead the renewal of curriculum and pedagogical change can be severely bruised as a result of the demolition of the educational change efforts. Anecdotal reports indicate a reluctance by those involved in the ELs to ever again participate in a major educational change process. Such an outcome is sad given that a leading ANZ economist has constantly flagged that Tasmania’s education system needs revitalising as the students in it are the least well-educated in the nation with very low student retention rates (Eastlake, 2005, 2007, 2008).

The ELs story is a sad episode for the public purposes of education and their enactment. Greg Barnes, a columnist with the Mercury (10 July 2006, p.16)\(^7\) provided an appropriate concluding summary of the whole sorry ELs saga:

> ELs should not be subjected to the whims of political sloganeering, and those in the education movement who do not have the wherewithal to embrace the reforms. The fact remains that ELs is the education system of the twenty-first century. It is widely praised by education authorities around the world for that very reason. The students of today and tomorrow cannot learn in silos. They cannot learn in a values vacuum. They are living in a globalised world where flexibility of thought, active citizenship and evolving process are critical tools. Tasmania, due largely to a visionary and tenacious minister, Paula Wriedt, was fortunate enough to be leading Australia in developing a twenty-first century curriculum. Ms Wriedt took on the educational establishment, conservative parent groups and the media in developing and implementing a curriculum that would set Tasmanian children apart and in front of their colleagues interstate.

### 4.6 References


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\(^7\) There is more than a touch of irony in the fact that this article strongly supporting ELs appeared in the Mercury.
Chapter 5: Principal survey

In the context described in the earlier chapters of the forces impacting on schools, the educational priorities of policy makers and the role played by the media, what do primary school principals themselves say is the importance of, and the degree to which enactment occurs on, different purposes of schools and the strategies used to achieve these purposes? What we learnt about the public purposes and their enactment from the earlier stages of the national research project was distilled into a survey which was piloted and then forwarded to all government primary school principals in Australia in early 2009 (see Appendix 3).

5.1 Introduction and demographic data

There were 57 responses to this survey from Tasmania, which represents 34% of the useable supplied email address list of primary school principals in the state (the Australia-wide response was 1,071 representing a 25% response rate). The number of Tasmanian primary school principal responses from different school types, sizes, etc are summarised in what follows.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Demographic Data by Tasmania and Total Sample</th>
<th>TAS (N) (%)</th>
<th>Total (N) (%)</th>
<th>% Difference</th>
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<tr>
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<td>64 (6)</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>255 (24)</td>
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<td>11 (20)</td>
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<td>11 to 15</td>
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<td>15+</td>
<td>13 (24)</td>
<td>264 (25)</td>
<td>-1</td>
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<td>Years in Current School</td>
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<td>137 (13)</td>
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<td>8+</td>
<td>4 (7)</td>
<td>213 (20)</td>
<td>-13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Numbers not always the same due to non-responses
** Percentages to do not always total 100 due to rounding

8 The Catholic and Independent sectors declined to participate.
9 A detailed analysis of the original list found a 7.5% error rate as a result of principal reassignment, leave, retirement, and resignation.
In terms of these demographic results, it can be seen from the comparison between the Tasmanian and Australian data that Tasmania has a lesser percentage of large schools of over 500 students, a greater percentage of principals over 40 years of age, a smaller percentage of principals with 6-10 years of experience but a greater percentage with 11-15 years of experience, a smaller percentage of principals with 1-3 and over 8 years in their current school but a greater percentage with 4-8 years in their current school.

5.2 Survey: Item analysis

The national survey listed a number of purposes of schools and strategies for achieving these purposes and asked principals to rate each of them in terms of importance and degree of enactment (using a five-point scale with five representing the highest importance or enactment). The following Table provides all the Tasmanian and Australian survey item Mean scores, the differences between Tasmanian importance and enactment scores, the differences between Australian importance and enactment scores, and the difference between the differences of the Tasmanian and Australian scores.

In terms of the importance of the purposes of education Tasmanian primary school principals rate the public purposes most highly and the private purposes most lowly.

The most highly ranked items (in order) were:
- “Help students develop a love of learning”
- “Promote social cohesion”
- “Help students develop capacities to become active and responsible members of a democratic Australian society”
- “Lay the foundations for a more socially just society”
- “Help students learn to value diversity”

The most lowly ranked items (in order) were:
- “Start the process of sorting and selecting students into categories that help students to determine their later life opportunities”
- “Strengthen Australia’s economy”

The rankings for the enactment of these purposes were very similar to those for importance.

The Tasmanian ranks were also very similar to those from Australian government primary principals as a whole, although Tasmanian primary principals tended to score higher on importance and lower on enactment on the public purposes and the reverse for private purposes. These differences result in larger difference scores between importance and enactment (a possible measure of dissatisfaction) for the Tasmanian primary principals, especially on the public purposes.

In terms of the importance of the strategies for achieving the purposes of education, Tasmanian primary school principals when compared with the national sample rate the public strategies most highly and the private strategies most lowly.

The most highly ranked items (in order) were:
- “Encourage students to accept responsibility for their own action”
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Wording</th>
<th>Importance</th>
<th>Enactment</th>
<th>Differences Import/Enact</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td><strong>Purposes</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>Tasmania</td>
<td>All</td>
<td>Dif</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P</td>
<td>Help students develop a love for learning</td>
<td>4.85</td>
<td>4.75</td>
<td>0.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P</td>
<td>Help students develop basic knowledge and skills for employment</td>
<td>4.01</td>
<td>4.25</td>
<td>-0.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P</td>
<td>Help students learn to value diversity</td>
<td>4.43</td>
<td>4.36</td>
<td>0.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P</td>
<td>Promote social cohesion</td>
<td>4.63</td>
<td>4.54</td>
<td>0.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P</td>
<td>Help students develop capacities to become active and responsible members of a democratic Australian society</td>
<td>4.58</td>
<td>4.55</td>
<td>0.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P</td>
<td>Contribute to an environmentally sustainable society</td>
<td>4.18</td>
<td>4.17</td>
<td>0.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P</td>
<td>Reflect and sustain the democratic values of society</td>
<td>4.36</td>
<td>4.22</td>
<td>0.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P</td>
<td>Provide a resource for the local community</td>
<td>3.92</td>
<td>3.76</td>
<td>0.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P</td>
<td>Assist in the development of their local communities</td>
<td>3.74</td>
<td>3.65</td>
<td>0.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P</td>
<td>Start the process of sorting and selecting students into categories that help to determine their later life opportunities</td>
<td>1.82</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>-0.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P</td>
<td>Compensate for disadvantage among students</td>
<td>4.07</td>
<td>4.06</td>
<td>0.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P</td>
<td>Lay the foundations for a more socially just society</td>
<td>4.46</td>
<td>4.14</td>
<td>0.32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P</td>
<td>Strengthen Australia’s economy</td>
<td>2.78</td>
<td>2.91</td>
<td>-0.13</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Strategies</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>Allow student involvement in negotiating the curriculum</td>
<td>3.59</td>
<td>3.56</td>
<td>0.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>Encourage student participation in delivering the curriculum</td>
<td>3.30</td>
<td>3.47</td>
<td>-0.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>Be designed on the understanding that all students can succeed</td>
<td>4.74</td>
<td>4.68</td>
<td>0.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>Be flexible enough to cater for the needs, interests and abilities of all students</td>
<td>4.86</td>
<td>4.74</td>
<td>0.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>Give a priority to academic learning in the school</td>
<td>3.82</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>-0.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>Value all learning areas</td>
<td>4.37</td>
<td>4.31</td>
<td>0.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>Develop the capacity in students to play an active and informed role in civic life</td>
<td>4.13</td>
<td>4.17</td>
<td>-0.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>Be focused upon success in the national literacy and numeracy tests</td>
<td>2.76</td>
<td>3.11</td>
<td>-0.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>Be holistic and integrated</td>
<td>4.15</td>
<td>4.25</td>
<td>-0.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>Ensure that assessment and reporting approaches support student learning</td>
<td>4.63</td>
<td>4.66</td>
<td>0.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>Ensure that assessment and reporting approaches are used to sort students</td>
<td>2.31</td>
<td>2.69</td>
<td>-0.38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Category</td>
<td>Description</td>
<td>Values</td>
<td>Students</td>
<td>Parents and Community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
<td>--------</td>
<td>----------</td>
<td>-----------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>Promote environmental sustainability</td>
<td>3.92</td>
<td>3.88</td>
<td>0.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>Promote respect for and understanding of difference</td>
<td>4.59</td>
<td>4.61</td>
<td>-0.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S</td>
<td>Make students the focus for what happens in the school</td>
<td>4.84</td>
<td>4.76</td>
<td>0.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S</td>
<td>Have enrolment policies and practices that result in a diverse mix of students</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>3.84</td>
<td>0.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S</td>
<td>Have interventions to help compensate for disadvantage</td>
<td>4.52</td>
<td>4.40</td>
<td>0.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S</td>
<td>Include measures to cater for students with diverse interests and needs</td>
<td>4.49</td>
<td>4.43</td>
<td>0.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S</td>
<td>Allocate extra resources for programs for students with specific or extra learning needs</td>
<td>4.77</td>
<td>4.60</td>
<td>0.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S</td>
<td>Encourage students to accept responsibility for their own actions</td>
<td>4.96</td>
<td>4.88</td>
<td>0.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S</td>
<td>Encourage students’ involvement in school decision making and leadership</td>
<td>4.28</td>
<td>4.16</td>
<td>0.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents and Community</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PC</td>
<td>Encourage parent involvement in negotiating the curriculum</td>
<td>3.26</td>
<td>3.12</td>
<td>0.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PC</td>
<td>Encourage parent involvement in delivering the curriculum</td>
<td>3.09</td>
<td>3.30</td>
<td>-0.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PC</td>
<td>Be a community resource</td>
<td>3.89</td>
<td>3.72</td>
<td>0.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PC</td>
<td>Encourage wide community involvement in the school</td>
<td>4.24</td>
<td>4.12</td>
<td>0.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ST</td>
<td>Promote trust amongst students, staff and parents</td>
<td>4.91</td>
<td>4.77</td>
<td>0.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ST</td>
<td>Practise decision making processes that are democratic and transparent</td>
<td>4.70</td>
<td>4.56</td>
<td>0.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ST</td>
<td>Value and foster the professionalism of teachers</td>
<td>4.86</td>
<td>4.83</td>
<td>0.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ST</td>
<td>Involve staff in decision making and leadership</td>
<td>4.82</td>
<td>4.70</td>
<td>0.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ST</td>
<td>Foster staff discussions about the purposes of schooling</td>
<td>4.40</td>
<td>4.35</td>
<td>0.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Processes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SP</td>
<td>Have goals and priorities that primarily reflect the interests of society as a whole</td>
<td>4.08</td>
<td>4.06</td>
<td>0.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SP</td>
<td>Employ democratic decision making</td>
<td>4.33</td>
<td>4.18</td>
<td>0.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SP</td>
<td>Foster an open and collaborative teaching culture</td>
<td>4.69</td>
<td>4.63</td>
<td>0.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SP</td>
<td>Promote collaboration rather than competition amongst schools</td>
<td>4.67</td>
<td>4.55</td>
<td>0.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SP</td>
<td>Contribute to the development of the local community</td>
<td>4.19</td>
<td>3.97</td>
<td>0.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SP</td>
<td>Have goals and priorities that concentrate upon the interests of students as individuals</td>
<td>4.37</td>
<td>4.27</td>
<td>0.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organisation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>O</td>
<td>Give parents the right to choose a school for their children</td>
<td>3.32</td>
<td>3.70</td>
<td>-0.38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>O</td>
<td>Give emphasis to diversity within schools</td>
<td>4.02</td>
<td>4.01</td>
<td>0.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>O</td>
<td>Statement</td>
<td>P1</td>
<td>P2</td>
<td>P3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>----</td>
<td>----</td>
<td>----</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Give emphasis to diversity between schools</td>
<td>3.22</td>
<td>3.39</td>
<td>-0.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Make schools accountable for social outcomes</td>
<td>2.51</td>
<td>2.69</td>
<td>-0.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ensure community involvement in developing education policy</td>
<td>3.42</td>
<td>3.27</td>
<td>0.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mandate national testing programs</td>
<td>1.98</td>
<td>2.44</td>
<td>-0.46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mandate league tables based upon test outcomes</td>
<td>1.07</td>
<td>1.26</td>
<td>-0.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Allow for school autonomy from system/employer</td>
<td>3.44</td>
<td>3.23</td>
<td>0.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Make schools accountable for academic outcomes</td>
<td>3.31</td>
<td>3.44</td>
<td>-0.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ensure school involvement in developing education policy</td>
<td>4.44</td>
<td>4.26</td>
<td>0.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fund schools on the basis of need</td>
<td>4.58</td>
<td>4.54</td>
<td>0.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Support schools to collaborate with each other</td>
<td>4.36</td>
<td>4.29</td>
<td>0.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ensure that all schools should have transparent enrolment policies</td>
<td>4.23</td>
<td>4.22</td>
<td>0.01</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Area in survey i.e.: P= Purposes, S= Students, PC= Parent and Community, ST= Staff, SP= School Processes, O= Organisation of schooling*
“Encourage respect and cooperation among students”
“Promote trust amongst students, staff and parents”
“Be flexible enough to cater for the needs, interests and abilities of all students”
“Value and foster the professionalism of teachers”
“Make students the focus for what happens in the school”
“Involve staff in decision making and leadership”

The most lowly ranked items (in order) were:
“Mandate league tables based on test outcomes”
“Mandate national testing programs”
“Make schools accountable for social outcomes”
“Be focussed upon success in the national literacy and numeracy tests”

Again, the rankings for the enactment of these strategies were very similar to those for importance, except in the most lowly ranked items which also included:
“Encourage parent involvement in negotiating the curriculum”
“Encourage parent involvement in delivering the curriculum”
“Encourage student participation in delivering the curriculum”
“Ensure school involvement in developing education policy”

The Tasmanian ranks were also similar to those from Australian government primary principals as a whole, although Tasmanian primary principals scored much lower on the importance of:
“Mandate national testing programs”
“Ensure that assessment and reporting approaches are used to sort students”
“Give parents the right to choose a school for their children”
“Be focussed upon success in the national literacy and numeracy tests”

Tasmanian primary principals also scored much lower on the enactment of:
“Ensure that all schools should have transparent enrolment policies”
“Ensure that assessment and reporting approaches are used to sort students”
“Give parents the right to choose a school for their children”
“Ensure that assessment and reporting approaches are used to support student learning”
“Ensure school involvement in developing education policy”
“Support schools to collaborate with each other”

In terms of the differences between importance and enactment (a possible measure of dissatisfaction) of the strategies, Tasmanian primary principals indicated the largest differences for (ranked):
“Ensure school involvement in developing education policy”
“Fund schools on the basis of need”
“Support school to collaborate with each other”
“Mandate national testing programs”
“Ensure that all schools should have transparent enrolment policies”
“Ensure that assessment and reporting approaches are used to support student learning”
“Promote collaboration rather than competition amongst schools”
“Mandate league tables based on test outcomes”

While these differences were similar with the results from the Australian-wide sample, they were much more strongly felt in Tasmania (that is, the differences between importance and enactment were greater).
5.3 Survey: Factor analysis

Another way to examine these purpose and strategy results is though the results of a statistical grouping of the items using Factor Analysis. In the Australia-wide sample, the following four purpose groupings of items/factors were found to account for 60% or the variance:

- Love of learning and responsible citizens for democracy and common good (33%)
- Community development and resource (11%)
- Social justice (8%)
- Sorting for employment and the economy (8%)

In addition, six strategy groupings of items/factors were found to account for 52% of the variance.

- Foster professional and student trust and collaboration (24%)
- Value and resource difference and disadvantage (8%)
- Community resource, development and involvement (6%)
- Emphasise diversity within and between schools (5%)
- Student involvement in curriculum (4%)
- National ‘basics’ tests to sort students and schools (5%)

The Tasmanian and Australia-wide Mean scores and Standard Deviations (SD) on these groupings/factors follows. The differences between them are also provided.10

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor</th>
<th>Importance Mean</th>
<th>Importance SD</th>
<th>Enactment Mean</th>
<th>Enactment SD</th>
<th>Difference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Love of learning and responsible citizens for democracy and common good</td>
<td>4.51</td>
<td>0.37</td>
<td>4.43</td>
<td>0.45</td>
<td>0.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community development and resource</td>
<td>3.84</td>
<td>0.77</td>
<td>3.70</td>
<td>0.81</td>
<td>0.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social justice</td>
<td>4.26</td>
<td>0.61</td>
<td>4.10</td>
<td>0.73</td>
<td>0.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sorting for employment and the economy</td>
<td>2.87</td>
<td>0.57</td>
<td>3.05</td>
<td>0.66</td>
<td>-0.18</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

10 Because of the small numbers involved in the Tasmanian sample (N = 56), few statistical analyses were undertaken.
Differences between Importance and Enactment on Tasmanian and Australian Purpose Mean Scores

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor</th>
<th>Total Sample</th>
<th>Difference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Love of learning and responsible citizens for democracy and common good</td>
<td>Mean 0.56</td>
<td>0.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Differ. 0.50</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community development and resource</td>
<td>Mean 1.33</td>
<td>0.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Differ. 1.06</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social justice</td>
<td>Mean 0.53</td>
<td>0.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Differ. 0.35</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sorting for employment and the economy</td>
<td>Mean -0.25</td>
<td>-0.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Differ. -0.17</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Comparison of Tasmanian and Australian Strategy Factor Mean Scores

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor</th>
<th>Total Sample</th>
<th>Difference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Foster professional and student trust and collaboration</td>
<td>Importance Mean 4.74</td>
<td>0.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SD 0.25</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Enactment Mean 4.16</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SD 0.47</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Value and resource difference and disadvantage</td>
<td>Importance Mean 4.67</td>
<td>0.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SD 0.29</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Enactment Mean 4.00</td>
<td>0.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SD 0.61</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community resource, development and involvement</td>
<td>Importance Mean 3.98</td>
<td>0.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SD 0.51</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Enactment Mean 3.01</td>
<td>0.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SD 0.66</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emphasise diversity within and between schools</td>
<td>Importance Mean 3.52</td>
<td>-0.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SD 0.81</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Enactment Mean 3.08</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SD 0.62</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student involvement in curriculum</td>
<td>Importance Mean 3.44</td>
<td>-0.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SD 0.63</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Enactment Mean 2.76</td>
<td>-0.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SD 0.54</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National 'basics' tests to sort students and schools</td>
<td>Importance Mean 2.38</td>
<td>-0.34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SD 0.46</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Enactment Mean 2.86</td>
<td>-0.17</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SD 0.61</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Differences between Importance and Enactment on Tasmanian and Australian Strategy Mean Scores

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor</th>
<th>Total Sample</th>
<th>Difference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Foster professional and student trust and collaboration</td>
<td>Mean 0.58</td>
<td>0.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Differ. 0.48</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Value and resource difference and disadvantage</td>
<td>Mean 0.67</td>
<td>0.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Differ. 0.57</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community resource, development and involvement</td>
<td>Mean 0.97</td>
<td>0.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Differ. 0.83</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emphasise diversity within and between schools</td>
<td>Mean 0.44</td>
<td>0.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Differ. 0.42</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student involvement in curriculum</td>
<td>Mean 0.68</td>
<td>0.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Differ. 0.64</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National 'basics' tests to sort students and schools</td>
<td>Mean -0.48</td>
<td>-0.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Differ. -0.31</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These results confirm the item analysis that Tasmanian primary school principals rate the public purposes most highly and the private purpose most lowly. In terms of enactment the public purposes of “Love of learning and responsible citizens for democracy and the common
“good” and “Social justice” are rated highly while the public purpose of “Community development and resource” and the private purpose of “Sorting for employment and the economy” are rated lowly.

The Tasmanian factor ratings were very similar to those from Australian government primary principals as a whole, although Tasmanian primary principals tended to score higher on importance on the public purposes and the reverse for private purposes. These differences reflect the item analysis with larger difference scores between importance and enactment (a possible measure of dissatisfaction) for the Tasmanian primary principals, especially on the public purposes.

In terms of the importance of the strategies for achieving the purposes of education, Tasmanian primary school principals again rate the public factors most highly and the private strategy most lowly, especially “Foster professional and student trust and collaboration”, “Value and resource difference and disadvantage” and “Community resource, development and involvement”. Enactment falls short of importance on all six strategy factors, especially “Community resource, development and involvement”, and enactment of the private purpose strategy factor of “National ‘basics’ tests to sort students and schools” is enacted more than its importance.

Compared to the Australia-wide results, Tasmanian primary principals scored higher on the importance of the strategy factors “Value and resource difference and disadvantage” and “Community resource, development and involvement” but lower on the importance of “Emphasise diversity within and between schools” and “National ‘basics’ tests to sort students and schools”. Tasmanian primary principals scored lower on the enactment of the strategy factors “Emphasise diversity within and between schools”, “Student involvement in the curriculum” and “National ‘basics’ tests to sort students and schools”. Paralleling the item analysis, the difference between the importance and enactment of the strategy factors (a possible measure of dissatisfaction) was higher for Tasmanian primary principals for all factors except “Emphasise diversity within and between schools” and “Student involvement in the curriculum”.

5.4 Demographic Differences

Using t-tests and Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) we tested for statistically significant differences (at the .05 level) between and among groups on the demographic variables. No statistically significant differences were found in respect of school socio-economic status or principal age. However differences were found on school size and principal gender, years in current school and years as a principal. These results follow.

Very small schools of 100 or less students scored significantly lower than other schools in respect of the importance of “promoting social cohesion” and “encouraging students to accept responsibility for their own actions”. Female principals scored significantly higher than male principals on the importance of “helping students to value diversity” and the curriculum being “designed on the understanding that all students can succeed” (although all scores are very high).

Those principals with 8+ years in their current school scored significantly higher than all other groups on the importance of “allowing for school autonomy from system/employer” and significantly lower on the importance of “having enrolment policies and practices in place that result in a diverse mix of students” and the enactment of “being focussed upon success in the national literacy and numeracy tests”. Those with 1 or less years in their current school had the lowest scores on the importance of “allowing for school autonomy from
system/employer” and the highest score on the enactment of “being focussed upon success in the national literacy and numeracy tests”.

### Statistically Significant Differences on Demographic Variables in the Tasmanian Survey Responses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Demographic Variable and Survey Item</th>
<th>Mean Scores and Significant Differences</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>School Size</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12A Importance of promoting social cohesion</td>
<td>3.57 4.06 4.18 4.30 4.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>100- 401+ 201-300 1.1-200 301-400</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>43A Importance of encouraging students to accept responsibility for their own actions</td>
<td>3.57 4.15 4.30 4.45 4.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>100- 401+ 201-300 101-200 301-400</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Principal Gender</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11A Importance of helping students learn to value diversity</td>
<td>4.21 4.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M F</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24A Importance of the curriculum being design on the understanding that all students can succeed</td>
<td>4.66 4.89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M F</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Principal Years in Current School</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36A Importance of having enrolment policies and practices that result in a diverse mix of students</td>
<td>2.25 3.89 4.20 4.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8+ -1 1 to 3 4 to 8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>37A Importance of having interventions to help compensate for disadvantage</td>
<td>4.10 4.25 4.33 4.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 to 3 8+ -1.00 4 to 8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>66A Importance of allowing for school autonomy from system/employer</td>
<td>3.00 3.39 3.40 4.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-1.00 4 to 8 1 to 3 8+</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21B Enactment of being focussed upon success in the national literacy and numeracy tests</td>
<td>1.75 2.79 2.82 3.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8+ 1.00 4 to 8 1 to 3 8+</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>67B Enactment of making schools accountable for academic outcomes</td>
<td>2.90 3.67 3.75 3.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 to 3 -1.00 8+ 4 to 8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Years as a Principal</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14A Importance of contribution to an environmentally sustainable society</td>
<td>3.78 4.00 4.38 4.62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 to 15 6 to 10 5- 15+</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24B Enactment of the curriculum being designed on the understanding that all students can succeed</td>
<td>3.36 3.89 4.08 4.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 to 10 11 to 15 5- 15+</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27B Enactment of valuing all learning areas</td>
<td>3.36 3.37 3.77 4.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 to 10 11 to 15 15+ 5-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41B Enactment of allocating extra resources for programs for students with specific or extra learning needs</td>
<td>4.00 4.54 4.61 4.62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 to 10 5- 11 to 15 15+</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>57B Enactment of contributing to the development of the local community</td>
<td>3.11 3.45 3.85 3.92</td>
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<tr>
<td>11 to 15 6 to 10 5- 15+</td>
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Those principals with 15+ years as a principal scored significantly higher than most other groups on the importance of “contribution to an environmentally sustainable society” and enactment of the curriculum being “designed on the understanding that all students can succeed”, “allocating extra resources for programs for students with specific or extra learning needs” and “contributing to the development of the local community”. Finally, those principals with 5 or less years as a principal scored significantly lower than most other groups on enactment of “valuing all learning areas”.

The final part of the national survey contained an open ended section asking principals to list elements that help promote or act as barriers to achieving the public purposes of schools. Space was also left for any other comments principals wished to make.
## 5.5 Survey: Open ended responses

*What factors do you think help to promote the public purposes of schools?*

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<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Responses</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
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</table>
| 1  | Adequate, equitable resourcing and support            | 14        | • Financing of schools on a needs basis (thus ensuring) sustainability.  
• A realistic understanding of the inequities for students in state education. We carry all the students others do not want and cannot teach. This grossly affects the ability to teach and cater for diversity across our school. Talented and gifted students as well as all average and above suffer for this.  
• The public purpose of schools would be promoted if government schools were funded to the same standard or better than those in the private system. How better to show that the social purpose is valued by the society?  
• Public education should be funded and supported to ensure that all students have access to a system which gives equal opportunities to all students. Unless we advance the opportunities for all individuals we are not fulfilling our role as educating students to live and fully participate in the wider community.  
• REAL and immediate inter-agency intervention on request.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| 2  | Sympathetic political processes and policy            | 12        | • A far more active/assertive Federal/State Government stance on the merits of public education.  
• The recognition by politicians, policymakers and the community in general that public education is successful for our children.  
• Less politicisation of education and curriculum by state and federal governments linked to re-electing the Minister for Education/the Government and less power given to minorities not representing public education who have the ear of government. Too few educators are advisers to state and federal government policy makers - too many career bureaucrats without understanding of the school-level needs are making decisions without informed consultation.  
• Governments do not communicate and celebrate the skills and work of principals in managing very efficient but under staffed and resourced businesses with generosity of spirit, commitment to social justice and high academic and social outcomes for students and creating a positive society, as well as or better than most corporate companies.                                                                                                                                               |
| 3  | Positive media and school promotion                   | 11        | • Positive press that focuses on the many good things that are happening in many schools.  
• Schools (enabled to be) self-promoting in their own community.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| 4  | Belief in students, partnerships and diversity         | 8         | • Developing a culture of tolerance and respect for others - along with the understanding that ALL students are capable of learning and progressing and success- this is NOT dependent on high socio-economic status.  
• Involvement of communities in schools. Use of school facilities by the community. Involvement of students with local community groups e.g. Local Council.  
• In essence we must ensure that we model and foster values [of] diversity, address disadvantage and allow for all members of the organisation to participate, relate and care.                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| 5  | Address societal problems and believe in public education | 6        | • Provision and support for the societal issues students bring to school.  
• Community commitment to and support of public education.  
• Current divisions and stresses in society that are creating 'haves' and 'have nots', 'excluded' and 'included'. These divisions lead to the promotion of extremist groups and eventually create a climate where terrorism can grow. Public schools provide society with a powerful opportunity to minimise these divisions, promote equity and tolerance and build a stable society that is better equipped to withstand international stressors.                                                                                              |
| 6  | Excellent teaching and learning                       | 5         | • Pursuit of excellence in teaching and learning.  
• Development of critical thinkers.  
• Curricula that recognises and develops difference.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
Twenty-six of the sample of fifty-seven (46%) Tasmanian principals replied to this question and they provided 56 responses (i.e., some respondents provided more than one opinion). These responses grouped into 6 areas as follows:

1. Adequate, equitable resourcing and support
2. Sympathetic political processes and policy
3. Positive media and school promotion
4. Belief in students, partnerships and diversity
5. Address societal problems and believe in public education
6. Excellent teaching and learning

A summary of the number (N), percentage (%) and example responses for each category are included in the above table. Three-quarters of responses relate to factors external to schools.

What do you think are the greatest barriers to achieving the public purposes of schools?

<table>
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<th>#</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Responses</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 1  | Inadequate, inequitable resourcing                        | 23        | • No government money should be going to support alternative systems. There was none 40 years ago. It is scandalous that we are closing public schools when many independent schools survive with fewer than 100 students in metropolitan areas. Parents with connections and influence are lost to the public system cause and they argue for maintaining difference; thus division and separation. They take themselves away from needing to deal with issues that arise in a public system that takes all children, irrespective of circumstance, but without the resources to support them.  
• We wish to be supported to offer the best educational opportunities for all students regardless of their abilities and socio economic backgrounds. This includes the brightest students as well as those with learning disabilities.  
• Under funding to support disadvantaged students and lack of service delivery to support disadvantaged families. |
| 2  | Unsympathetic, expedient political processes and policy   | 12        | • Too strong an emphasis on short-term accountability and political expediency.  
• Political inaction / apathy - and a Federal Government that refuses to ensure that ‘social justice’ is the central plank in its education policy.                                                                                                                       |
| 3  | Mistaken belief that public schools can fix all societal problems | 10        | • The expectation that schools can and should fix all of society's problems.  
• Community values, ethics and social justice issues are only as strong as the public education system. The diversity in provision and the "brain drain" to affluent independent schools can only result in a widening and entrenching of intergenerational barriers to full and equal participation opportunities. |
| 4  | Negative media portrayal of public schools                | 9         | • Media portrayal of public schools as second rate.  
• The mistaken public perception that public education is crap - as pushed by the Liberals and most of the media.                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| 5  | Competitive national testing and league tables           | 5         | • League tables approaches and a focus on quantitative data rather than qualitative data. Not enough focus on the Arts and creativity in the curriculum due to focus on Literacy, Numeracy, Science, and History.                                                                                                                                                     |
| 6  | Unfair enrolment policies                                | 5         | • Government schools are forced to take enrolments, while private schools can select their intake. We have established an uneven playing field for children entering education. Most parents don't have 'real choice'.                                                                                                      |
| 7  | Poor teachers, curriculum and school organisation        | 6         | • Lack of opportunity for schools/systems to really get to the heart of what is the common good.  
• Lack of school relevance when the curriculum does not appear relevant to students. That they can't join the dots between what they do at school and their future. Lack of resilience (mental and general health) many students exhibit which significantly affects their ability/desire to learn.  
• Lack of access to excellent teachers.                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
Thirty-nine of the fifty-seven (68%) Tasmanian principals responded to this open-ended question. Seventy response items were received (i.e., some respondents provided more than one opinion) and these were sorted into seven categories, as follows:

1. Inadequate, inequitable resourcing
2. Unsympathetic, expedient political processes and policy
3. Mistaken belief that public schools can fix all societal problems
4. Negative media portrayal of public schools
5. Competitive national testing and league tables
6. Unfair enrolment policies
7. Poor teachers, curriculum and school organisation

The summary of the number (N) percentage (%) and example responses for each category are included in the above table. The first six categories (91% of responses) relate to factors external to the school and only the final, seventh, category relates to factors within a school.

Any other comments?

Thirteen of the sample of fifty-seven (23%) Tasmanian principals replied to this question and they provided 16 responses (some respondents again provided more than one opinion). Almost half (44%) of the responses related to calls for a more inclusive, cohesive, collaborative society and political policy. Examples follow:

- For Australia to become a truly equitable and inclusive society we need to support the public education system to a far greater extent.
- John Howard said on retirement that giving parents ‘choice’ was one of his greatest achievements. How sad it is that it is premised on ability to pay; and where entry is through interview, scholarships and intellect. The Australian tenet that every child deserves ‘a fair go’ has been affected by the decade of his government's policy directions and it can only be hoped that the maintenance of our cohesive society has not been jeopardized.
- Until the state and national Health systems and associated Community Services agencies (including Youth Justice and Child Protection) are linked to supporting the family/child in a collaborative and holistic way in partnership with schools, then schools will continue to be expected to carry out far more than their core business of academic and social learning and to have to deal with/respond to the mental health issues of families, to clothe, feed and nurture as well as teach students.

Other responses reiterated:
- the need for and better use of resources (e.g., “So much $ resource is wasted as a result of silo structures across govt agencies - so much more could be achieved for the common good if there was true collaboration and commitment to common goals for children and families by those that seek to enact social justice principles.”),
- changing a negative media (e.g., “Media negativity towards public education is a serious problem in undermining public confidence - and in suggesting to well-intentioned parents that private education is a better option for their child.”) and
- giving a greater focus to teaching for diversity (e.g., “Students with diverse needs need diverse teaching strategies provided and planned for by teachers” and “One size doesn't fit all - there may be dangers in mandating a national curriculum with a narrow content focus.”).

Tasmanian Principals’ responses to the open-ended questions in the Purposes of Education Survey lead us to conclude:
- the very high response rate for open-ended questions, especially to the barriers in achieving the public purposes of schools, suggest the issues raised are deeply and widely felt;
- the set of responses and their weightings are similar to each of the three questions;
- factors ‘external’ to the school dominate (at least three-quarters or responses). Inadequate resourcing and support, unsympathetic politicians and bureaucracies, broader societal problems laid at the school door, and a negative media are seen by Tasmanian principals to contribute to an uneven playing field, especially in comparison with the private schooling sector, and difficulty in successfully catering for, or at a minimum showing
tolerance to, a diverse student population and facilitating a socially just, equitable, cohesive, and inclusive society; and,

- current one size fits all approaches (for example, to curriculum, testing, etc) are not seen as successful, especially for the disadvantaged.

5.6 Conclusions

What is clear from the survey of primary principal views about the importance and enactment of the purposes of schools and the strategies used to achieve these purposes is that Tasmanian primary principals rate both the importance and enactment of public purposes and strategies most highly and private purposes and strategies most lowly. Groupings of survey items on purposes such as “Love of learning and responsible citizens for democracy and the common good” and “Social justice” rated very highly while “Sorting for employment and the economy” rated very lowly. Groupings of survey items on strategies such as “Foster professional and student trust and collaboration”, “Value and resource difference and disadvantage” and “Community resource, development and involvement” rated very highly while “‘National ‘basics’ tests to sort students and schools” rated very lowly.

Statistically significant differences were found among Tasmania primary principals on the basis of a number of demographic variables, especially school size and principal experience. Very small schools of 100 or less students scored significantly lower than other schools in respect of the importance of “promoting social cohesion” and “encouraging students to accept responsibility for their own actions”.

Those principals with 15 or more years as a principal scored significantly higher than most other experience groups on the importance of the public purposes and/or strategies of contributing to “an environmentally sustainable society” and enactment of the curriculum being “designed on the understanding that all students can succeed”, “allocating extra resources for programs for students with specific or extra learning needs” and “contributing to the development of the local community”. Those principals with five or less years as a principal scored significantly lower than most other experience groups on enactment of “valuing all learning areas”.

Those principals with eight or more years in their current school scored significantly higher than all other groups on the importance of “allowing for school autonomy from system/employer” and significantly lower on the enactment of “being focussed upon success in the national literacy and numeracy tests”. Those with one or less years in their current school had the lowest scores on the importance of “allowing for school autonomy from system/employer” and the highest score on the enactment of “being focussed upon success in the national literacy and numeracy tests”.

These results suggest that it takes time as a principal to wean oneself from the system and be able to stand on one’s own two professional feet. It may also be that support for and enactment of the public purposes of education are more likely with a great deal of experience both as a principal and in one’s school.

When compared with the results from the national sample, Tasmanian primary principals tended to score higher on importance and lower enactment for both the purposes and the strategies used to achieve the purposes, especially those purposes and strategies linked to public purposes. These results suggest a greater dissatisfaction exists amongst Tasmanian primary principals than Australia-wide. The greatest difference/dissatisfaction for Tasmanian primary principals related to strategies originating outside schools at the system level. These strategies included collaboration (“Ensure school involvement in developing education policy” and “Promote collaboration rather than competition amongst schools”), enrolment policies (“Ensure that all schools … have transparent enrolment policies” and “Give parents
the right to choose a school for their children”), assessment (“Ensure that assessment and reporting approaches are used to support student learning” and not “to sort students” or “Mandate national testing programs”), and resourcing (“Fund schools on the basis of need”). There was also a great deal of dissatisfaction (the gap between importance and enactment) amongst Tasmanian Primary principals on the strategy “Community resource, development and involvement”.

The open ended responses reinforced the survey item findings. The very high response rate in this section of the survey, especially in relation to the barriers in achieving the public purposes of schools suggests the issues raised are deeply and widely felt by Tasmanian primary principals. Factors external to the school again dominate. Inadequate resourcing and support and unsympathetic politicians and bureaucracies (such as their insistence on one size fits all approaches, including for curriculum and assessment through testing) are seen to contribute to an uneven playing field, especially in comparison with the private schooling sector, and difficulties in successfully catering for a diverse student population and facilitating a socially just, equitable, cohesive, and inclusive society.

Given the high priority being given to the importance and enactment of public purposes and public strategies by Tasmanian educational policy makers and primary school principals, are there any examples of schools actually achieving them? The next chapter provides a detailed best practice case study of one such Tasmanian school.
Chapter 6: Enactment case study: Lansdowne Crescent Primary School

6.1. Introduction, focus and school selection

6.1.1 Introduction
In our interview with the Minister for Education (and now also Premier) for this research project he stated “What I’ll be really interested in out of this research is [how we translate the] pretty lofty ideals of equity, prosperity and democracy [into practice]. How do you translate [public purposes] into how school operate, what they do on a daily basis? … That’s really hard stuff.” This chapter seeks to provide a rich, longitudinal case study of one Tasmanian primary school that can answer the Minister’s question.

6.1.2 Focus
This case study focused on the public purposes of education. It sought to clarify what is meant by terms such as public good or common good which are often used in education debates but rarely explained. In particular, the case study explored how a Tasmanian school community understands the public purposes of education, what strategies they are using to advance these purposes, and what factors help or hinder their realisation.

The case study is organised around the following areas: introduction, focus and school selection; school profile, including location, mission, priorities, parent body, demographics, teaching staff, resources, and student performance; methodology, including school acceptance of involvement, documentation and visits, and observations; results, including from and about the principal and senior staff, teachers, students, and parents and community; conclusion.

6.1.3 School selection
For the case study we sought a school that was performing at a high level both in terms of its student literacy and numeracy results and social skill development, was reputed to be enacting the public purposes of education (although the major purpose of the study was to clarify and describe these), had an enrolment in excess of 300, and for ease of contact was within reasonable travel distance from the University of Tasmania’s Hobart campus of the Faculty of Education.

The Tasmanian Principals Association (TPA), a sub group of the Australian Government Primary Schools Principals Association, provided the researchers with a list of 23 primary schools in southern Tasmania with student populations in excess of 300 and short listed six that they considered were worthy of selection. One of the major criteria in this short listing was whether or not the school had been heavily committed to the Tasmanian Department of Education’s Essential Learnings Curriculum (ELs) with its strong links to the public purposes of education. For example, the five goals articulated in this curriculum were:

1. Responsive and continually improving services that ensure all Tasmanians develop the knowledge, skills and confidence they need;
2. Enriching and fulfilling learning opportunities that enable people to work effectively and participate in society;
3. Safe and inclusive learning environments that encourage and support participation in learning throughout life;
4. An information rich community with access to global and local information resources so that everyone has the opportunity to participate in, and contribute to, a healthy democracy and a prosperous society; and,
5. A valued and supported education workforce that reflects the importance of teaching as a profession.

Whilst Goal 1 relates mainly to private purposes of schooling it is clear that Goals 2-5 exemplify public purposes. These goals are strengthened in complementary statements of value, purpose and the essential learnings themselves, such as social responsibility involving building social capital, valuing diversity and acting democratically (see Tasmanian Department of Education, 2002).

The researchers then employed a substantial data base developed during recent research projects undertaken by the University of Tasmania, Faculty of Education Leadership for Learning Group, that included performance data from most Tasmanian schools on literacy and numeracy and, most importantly, the development of student social skills (see: Edmunds et al, in press; Ewington et al 2008; Gurr et al, 2007 & in press; Mulford, 2005, 2007a & b, 2008; Mulford & Johns, 2004; Mulford et al, 2005, 2008 a & b, & in press).

Despite its high socio-economic status (or, more correctly in the Tasmanian context, low Education Needs Index (ENI)11) one of the six nominated schools, Lansdowne Crescent Primary School (LCPS), was achieving above what would be expected, i.e., in the top 17% of schools or above the regression band in both literacy/numeracy and social skills12 (see Charts 1 and 2). On the basis of this additional evidence, the TPA supported the selection of LCPS as the case study school.

6.2 Profile of Lansdowne Crescent Primary School (LCPS)

6.2.1 Location

LCPS is located in the suburb of West Hobart and is within three kilometres of the Hobart city centre. The school describes itself as being situated in pleasant surroundings, enjoying an unsurpassed view over the city to the Derwent estuary and eastern shores of Hobart (see photo). The school consists of four blocks of classrooms in well laid out spacious grounds.

Children from Kindergarten to Grade 6 are enrolled and are taught in both single and composite class groups of students.

Five other government primary schools are located within a three kilometre radius resulting in a high level of competition for students. LCPS has a policy of only taking students from

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2 Tasmanian schools are classified according to an Education Needs Index (ENI) ranging from 1 (low needs) to in excess of 100 (high needs). The Index for each school is derived using socio-economic data from the Australian Census, size of centre (town, locality), distance from the Department of Education district administration office and the number of students receiving government financial student assistance. The ENI impacts on the numbers of teachers and the level of funding received from the Department of Education by schools. Schools with higher needs receive additional staff and finance to enable them to make better provision for students requiring additional learning support. Most of the high needs schools in Tasmania are located in suburban government funded broad-acre welfare housing areas and in more isolated communities.

In order to avoid over-interpreting small differences in scores in our research, and given the negative correlation of scores with ENI, adjusted scores were also calculated. These adjusted scores were based on the number of points above or below the regression lines. Schools were given an adjusted score of 3 if they were in the top 17 per cent, 2 in the middle 66 per cent or 1 if in the bottom 17 per cent. This is illustrated in the Charts which show primary schools by mean/median Literacy/Numeracy and their mean Social Success Index scores, with the solid arrows indicating scores of 3, between the black lines scores of 2 and hatched arrows scores of 1. Lansdowne Crescent Primary School scored 3 in both areas and is indicated by the oval (each oval is a Tasmania primary school) next to the box containing ‘LCPS’.

12 Student performance in literacy/numeracy was supplied by the Tasmanian Department of Education and social skills was derived from teacher and principal survey responses to survey items such as students are able to solve conflicts through negotiation, are able to listen to others and want to have an influence, do not accept discrimination, have adopted democratic values, are responsible and democratic, and understand that bullying is totally unacceptable.
within its own area. The enrolment capacity has easily been achieved from within the designated feeder area resulting in a turning away of students from other locations. Approximately 335 children attend the school. This is the school’s highest student enrolment. Enrolments in the previous five years have ranged from 271 in 2003 to 296 in 2007.

Chart1: Primary literacy/numeracy by ENI
The school buildings are a mix of architectural styles (see photo below) as additional classrooms and facilities have been added to meet the changing needs of the school during the almost 100 years of its existence.

During the period of the case study, the school was under-going a major redevelopment program with temporary classrooms being replaced by permanent structures and the original, main building, being upgraded. The works program included the construction of two new classrooms (see photo below), the refurbishment of four classrooms and the library in the original section of the school. Whilst this redevelopment caused much dislocation and inconvenience to teachers and students it was observed to have minimal effect on the continued delivery of learning programs and relationships within the school community. A
feeling of optimism and belief in the long term benefits of the upgrade appeared evident among school personnel.

The upgraded facilities were officially opened in September 2008 by Lisa Singh MHA and Duncan Kerr MHR, both of whom are members for Denison, the electorate in which the school is located. During the opening, the principal and members of state and federal parliament all made mention of the very high levels of cooperation between the school staff, students, parents, the project manager and the on-site foreman. In a sense, the notion that cooperation among all associated with LCPS is desirable and important (as observed by the researchers throughout this project, and detailed in later sections of this paper) was exemplified when Duncan Kerr called upon the principal, the project manager and the site foreman to join with him in the unveiling of the plaque marking the event.

The artwork commissioned as part of the redevelopment building program was particularly symbolic. A giant tree root has been sculptured to emerge from the hillside and designed as a seat on which students can sit and converse (see photo). The root is representative of the notion that primary education provides the foundation of student schooling and as such is most important. Yet to be engraved in the sculpture are three poems written by students, as follows:

- Different faces Surround me. Happy, laughing In their smiles I’m safe
- Sun on a quiet bench Beside gently swaying trees Leaves blow with the breeze
- Small skink running fast Straight through the playground Safe under a rock

The relocation of students following the completion of the works program has enabled some spaces to be better utilised. One example has been the creation of a gallery in which student work can be displayed and appreciated by those who enter the school. Visitors find that the school foyer is a busy, joyful place with welcoming administrative staff and quickly gain an impression of what is valued. On display are Department of Education Awards for Excellence, certificates of appreciation and awards from different organisations and community groups. There are fine examples of students’ work, a parent noticeboard, the Code of Ethics for the Teaching Profession in Tasmania, a history cupboard that began in 1916 when the school was built, and pictures of the total school enrolment (2005 and 2007). The success of students and that of the school community is celebrated and represented in the school foyer.

6.2.2 School mission

The stated mission of LCPS is to:

Educate children in all areas of intellectual, physical, social, moral and emotional development.

The school’s mission statement goes on to state that:

Learning takes place in an environment which is stimulating, supportive, aesthetic and effectively organised. We aim to be a centre for educational excellence set in a community which is fully involved in its activities and to work together with parents to create a climate where learning is valued, children are safe and secure and where the partnership between school and parents continues to be productive and mutually supportive.
In brief, LCPS’s mission is enacted through high levels of empowerment; empowerment of students, teachers and parents and members of the community.

The prominently displayed motto of LCPS (see the photo taken of a large wall in the playground) is:

Respect for One and All.

The notion of gaining respect and acting in a positive way is exemplified in the school’s goals and Behaviour Support Policy statement:

Goals (include):
The goal for our students is self-discipline so that their actions will reflect a consideration of the rights of others as well as their own needs.

Our objective is to encourage students to develop positive attitudes towards themselves, the school, their peers and learning.

Behaviour Support Policy (includes):
The goal for our students is self-discipline so that their actions will reflect a consideration of the rights of others as well as their own needs. We believe the best way to promote self-discipline is to encourage students to realise that they are responsible for their actions and the consequences of their behaviour.

Our objective is to encourage students to develop positive attitudes towards themselves, the school, their peers and learning. We believe this can be achieved in a school where people’s rights are acknowledged and respected. These rights imply certain responsibilities.

In brief, the school believes that the best way to promote self-discipline is to encourage students to realise that they are responsible for their actions and the consequences of their behaviour, that positive attitudes can be achieved in a school where people’s rights are acknowledged and respected and that rights imply certain responsibilities. Although the behavioural policy statement contains a list of procedural steps for teachers to follow, the policy also clearly states that circumstances may dictate that teachers may not proceed through all steps of the policy, in order,

especially, if the physical safety of individuals is at risk.
And, that the empowerment of teachers is an important feature of the policy.

In all matters with regard to behaviour support the professional judgement of the teacher is paramount in ensuring successful outcomes.

6.2.3 School priorities

The Successful School Principals Project (SSPP – see earlier references on page 2), as part of an international research study during 2005 and 2006, surveyed schools in Tasmania to find out what their three major achievements were during the previous five years, their planned focus for the next five years and what matters weren’t discussed in the school, but if they were, could make a difference. The responses by the principal of LCPS were as follows:

Achievements last 5 years (SSPP March, 2006):

- Improved relations between school and community
- Redistribution of leadership skills to a wider group
- Professional learning more focussed

Focus for next 5 years (SSPP March, 2006):

- Improved pedagogy in all classes to meet changing needs
- Improved physical environment
- Children taking more ownership of their own learning.

Matters not talked about (SSPP March, 2006):

- Nothing. We talk about everything.

The research team observed that there was indeed a focus on the achievement of improved pedagogy, physical environment and students accepting ownership of their learning. Children at LCPS are taught using a variety of teaching approaches ranging from large group activities to specialist programs. Students are encouraged to develop skills, knowledge and understanding across the whole spectrum of the curriculum so that each may have opportunities to realise their full potential. There is a strong sense of “community” within the school that is actively promoted by the principal and acknowledged and supported by the students.

Staff readily engaged parents and members of the wider community to assist in the provision of a curriculum that met the needs of particular students. For example, the use of visiting authors to stimulate the writing process in students at risk has proven to be most successful. Students are encouraged to participate in school decision-making processes and, as they progress from year to year accept increasing leadership roles when working with younger students. Members of staff are given opportunities to talk about everything. The inclusive nature of the school was constantly enacted by the principal, staff, parents and students.

6.2.4 Parent body

Parents are fiercely proud of their school. They, and their children, are strongly encouraged by the principal and staff to participate in and/or contribute to school decision-making. It is common to observe fathers, mothers and couples walking with their children (of all ages) to school each morning as a part of their daily routine. Fifty or more parents can be seen attending school assemblies. Grandparents are also seen to be attending assemblies and sporting activities.

The parent body, the School Community Association (SCA), is very active and raised some $20,000 during the past twelve months. The SCA also sponsors regular activities on Friday evenings in which families, students and parents, can enjoy joint participation, such visits to ‘Skating World’. The school has a strong uniform policy resulting in all students wearing the uniform regularly.
6.2.5 Demographics
The changing demographic in this inner-city area has seen the Educational Needs Index (ENI) for the school become lower in recent years. As indicated earlier, LCPS is now a comparatively low needs school with a needs factor in 2008 of 23. The ENI for 2008 is calculated from 2007 data by Educational Performance Services in the Tasmanian Department of Education (DoE). The higher the ENI number, the higher the educational need. Numbers range from 12 (low need) to 108 (high need). The number of students on the Severe Disabilities Register in August 2007 was three. Four students self-identified as Aboriginal. The student enrolment did not fluctuate markedly during the year (between March and August 2007, six students left the school and two students arrived).

6.2.6 Teaching staff
The full time equivalent (FTE) number of teachers allocated to the school for 2008 was 16 and included the principal and two Advanced Skills Teachers (Senior Staff). The actual number of teaching staff is, in reality, much higher than sixteen due to the large number of teachers working part-time and/or shared with other schools. The senior staff have the equivalent of two days release from their class during which they undertake their across school duties. One teaches kindergarten in order to gain release time while the other must be replaced on an upper primary class by a part-time teacher. The Student-Teacher Ratio (inclusive of the principal) in March 2007 was 18.8 to 1. The students are distributed across 14 classrooms, five of which are paired spaces that are shared by two teachers, some working part-time or engaged in other duties for part of the week, operating in tandem with each other.

6.2.7 Resources
The total School Resource Package (SRP) provided by the DoE for 2007 was $299782.11. Of this amount, funds provided that directly relate to student learning are General Support Grant (Per Capita $74362, Educational Needs $15452), Information and Communication Technologies $19239 and Student Assistance Scheme $3763. A 0.9 FTE of a teacher was allocated to support the Flying Start Program, a literacy support program used to support students in their early years of schooling.

6.2.8 Student performance
March 2008 School Performance Indicators released by the DoE’s Educational Performance Services Unit show that, on a comparative basis across Tasmania, LCPS is performing at above average levels in measures of student, staff and parent satisfaction. The absentee rate for students during 2007 was 5.5%, which was categorised as average. Student achievement on the Kindergarten Development Check, which is designed to assist teachers in the early identification of any kindergarten student who is at risk of not achieving expected developmental outcomes and may require a specific intervention program and/or support from specific support personnel (e.g. “Increasingly cooperates with other students in extended play situations) was above average. Student performance is also categorised as above average in Reading, Mathematics, and in the state-wide Literacy and Numeracy Monitoring Program for Year 3 and Year 5 students.

The value added results (provided by the DoE) for student improvement from year 3 to Year 5 (2005-2007) showed above average improvement in reading, writing and numeracy. Student assessments taken from the DoE’s Student Assessment and Reporting Information System and provided to the school by Educational Performance Services indicate that in all year levels students are performing above the state mean in English-literacy, Mathematics-literacy, and Health and wellbeing, and were all trending upwards. Wellbeing includes items for teachers, students and parents related to the public purposes of education, such as:

- Staff - supportive leadership, professional interaction, participative decision-making, curriculum coordination,
Student - student motivation, student decision-making, purposeful teaching, teacher empathy with students, and
Parents - satisfaction level of parents, student social skills, school improvement and classroom behaviour.

Data from the 2008 National Assessment Program in Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) indicated the following percentages of LCPS Year 3 students were at or above the 80th percentile – Reading 33%, Writing 40%, Spelling 30%, Grammar and Punctuation 32%, and Numeracy 42%. The results for Year 5 students were Reading 47%, Writing 29%, Spelling 29%, Grammar and Punctuation 41%, and Numeracy 50%. Except for Year 3 Reading (97%), 100% of Year 3 and 5 students were at or above national minimum standards in these areas.

6.3 Methodology
The case study required the school’s acceptance of involvement, agreement on available documentation and visits, and observations that could be undertaken, as well as the approach employed in data collection.

6.3.1 School Acceptance of Involvement
The researchers first met with LCPS’s principal Peter (Pete) Marmion in December 2007 to invite him and his school to participate in the research project. Pete indicated that he was keen to participate but wanted to gain staff acceptance prior to confirming acceptance on behalf of the school. Just prior to the end of the 2007 school year, at a meeting of staff, the teachers agreed to participate in the case study. The principal and staff saw their inclusion in the project as a means of obtaining external feedback on their goals, aspirations and enactment of these, and viewed the project as a professional development exercise.

Immediately prior to the start of the 2008 school year the research team attended the school’s first staff meeting and outlined the scope of the case study. Teachers welcomed the input and were keen to participate. It became evident that they were very proud of their school. The researchers also observed proceedings during a subsequent staff meeting and noted that all teachers had the opportunity to place items on the agenda. Each item is treated with respect, valued and discussed in turn. Before the conclusion of the meeting each teacher, in turn, is asked if they have other items of business or matters to add. The researchers were given an open invitation to attend any or all school activities.

The research team also attended the first Parent Community Association Meeting for 2008 and provided information about the case study and invited their participation. Parents expressed interest and welcomed the opportunity to contribute their views as to the public purposes of education in their school. The intention was for members of school Community Council to be interviewed in May 2008. As the research team were leaving the meeting, a parent who was training to be a teacher approached us and volunteered that:

The success of the school is due heavily to the principal, Pete Marmion.

6.3.2 Documentation and Visits
The study has employed multiple data sources (triangulation) including documentation, visits/interviews and observations.

6.3.2.1 School documentation
The researchers were provided with access to:
- Principal’s application for LCPS;
- School policies (including literacy, numeracy and behaviour management);
6.3.2.2 School visits and interviews

Initial visits were focused on the researchers developing an understanding of the goals and aspirations of staff and parents, the many facets of the school, and the manner in which it functioned. Observations were recorded and pertinent comments of parents, teachers and students were noted.

Over an eight month period visits included:
- attending three staff meetings;
- attending a School Community Association meeting;
- attending a parent meet-the-teacher and barbecue function;
- observing students arriving with parents on the first day of school;
- observing the school’s Daily Fitness Program in operation;
- attending the school athletics carnival;
- attending school assemblies, including the opening of the school’s new facilities;
- meetings with the principal and senior staff; and
- interviews with senior staff, teachers and parents (all of which were taped).

6.3.3 Observations

Observations made during the visits were recorded, reviewed and analysed to identify and distil the public purposes and the manner in which they were enacted in the school. As an integral part of the process the researchers maintained a list of items to follow up with the principal and staff. Observations, for example, about the relationships among and between members of the school community, the focus on inclusion and support, the emphasis on participatory decision making, including, the participation of parents in the life of the school, the multiple, layered purposes evident in the enactment of school activities, and school assemblies are included in relevant sections of this document.

6.3.4 Data collation

There are a number of ways the case study data could have been presented. We have chosen another form of triangulation, that is to first detail the evidence from, and about, the principal and senior staff. From this data, as well as that on the school’s profile, we reach tentative conclusions about how LCPS understands the public purposes of education, what strategies they are using to advance these purposes, and what factors they see as helping and/or hindering their realisation. We then test these tentative conclusions through the evidence from, and about, the teachers, students and parents and wider community. The results section, which follows, employs this sequence.

6.4 Results

6.4.1 Principal

Prior to becoming Principal of LCPS, Peter Marmion had gained four years experience as a senior teacher and 14 years as a principal in three different primary schools. Peter, or Pete as he likes to be called, had also spent one year working in an environment centre providing support to teachers. Pete has been principal of this school for six years.
Outside the school Pete is highly respected by his professional colleagues and is an executive member of the Tasmanian Principals Association. He has undertaken a mentoring role as part of the Tasmanian Education Department’s Principal Mentoring Project, is a member of the Department’s School Improvement Board and is actively involved in organising professional development for principals, particularly as a member of organising committees for principal conferences.

Pete has major roles outside the sphere of schools. He is a tutor for Adult Education environmental programs, and co-leads a weekend course entitled ‘The Magic of Melaleuca” in the remote South-west of Tasmania. He is a member of the board of Huon Valley’s Learning and Information Network Centre (LINC) that brings together a number of government and community organisations such as the library/online access centre, Centrelink, Service Tasmania, Business Enterprise Centre and the Magistrates Court under one roof. For 11 years Pete has been Chair of Southern Training Employment and Placement Solutions Ltd (STEPS) which provides housing, training and employment for those less advantaged in the Huon and greater Hobart communities. Pete also has many memberships of cultural and sporting groups in the local community. Pete lives in and commutes daily from a small rural centre south of Hobart.

Pete’s application for the position of principal at LCPS confirms his desire to be part of:

a vibrant and unique school community.

He saw this community having a commitment to:

building a culture of continuous improvement.

Three cornerstones were identified by Pete for building a culture of continuous improvement:

- students,
- teachers, non-teaching staff, and after-school care staff and
- parents carers and community members.

His stated outcomes arising from a culture of continuous improvement were:

- Strong collaboration
- Caring relationships
- High and achievable expectations
- Opportunities for all
- High literacy and numeracy achievements for students
- Parents valued
- Highly skilled teaching and non-teaching staff
- Teachers making a difference
- Targeted, quality professional development meeting staff’s needs to address needs of students
- Clearly articulated leadership roles
- Quality physical learning environments
- High levels of enthusiasm and energy
- School community feeling of pride and strong sense of ownership of their school

He saw the centre piece for achieving this culture as the development of:

a community working and learning together.

His more detailed strategies for leading pedagogical and curriculum change were grouped under four key headings. A sample of items, considered to provide indicators of his leadership style, is listed under each heading (See Appendix 5 for a full list of items):

- Classroom programs
Ensure clear goals for learning are in place and fully understood by children, parents and teachers
Ensure classroom time is focussed on what is worth knowing, valuing and understanding
Ensure high expectations for both teaching and learning are in place
Ensure there is a supportive school climate ensure provision is made for a variety of learning styles
Ensure success is celebrated

- Intervention
  - Carefully track each child’s progress as they move through the school
  - Ensure multi-layering of the curriculum
  - Ensure teachers understand the accountability of their role
  - Ensure teachers understand that different objectives can be set for each child within the same teaching context

- Professional learning
  - Ensure professional learning is staged, site based and owned by all staff
  - Ensure there is sufficient time for reflection
  - Ensure high but achievable expectations are in place
  - Ensure staff are working in collegial teams

- Parents and community as partners
  - Ensure ongoing literacy and numeracy training for parent volunteers
  - Ensure all classrooms have a welcoming atmosphere for parent involvement
  - Involve parents in assessment and reporting procedures

Despite this ambitious agenda, Pete was also very clear in his view that successful change would be

a slow and measured event.

However, during the case study Pete expressed major concerns about the sometimes debilitating role politicians and Departments of Education can have in this change. For example, Pete said the school saw curriculum, especially literacy, as being “a much bigger animal than politicians and departmental administrators believe”. He elaborated by stating that the school

would never treat children with the disdain of getting them barking at print with idiotic things like Spalding. What the school is doing is teaching literacy in the richest possible environment – we have people like Christa here today inspiring children!

As the incoming Deputy President (Primary) of the Tasmanian Principals Association, Pete was also very worried by the DoE’s range of one-off yearly surveys to evaluate the performance of schools and their principals, especially as these results were soon to be made publicly available on the DoE web site. He himself had had a very disappointing experience with these surveys. In the 2007 results, the interstate consultants who were contracted to develop, run and interpret survey results in Tasmanian schools indicated that he needed to show more empathy. While he joked about this at the first staff meeting for the year, it was clear in subsequent discussions that this advice had weighed on his mind over the Christmas holidays. Advice from the 2008 survey suggested he involve staff more in decision-making. When compared to our findings, this advice is absurd. It also demonstrates a potential weakness of these one-off, ‘one size fits all’ approaches to school and principal evaluation. Given the increasing public availability of such questionable survey findings and advice, there is the potential for great damage to be done. In the case of Pete he has and continues to feel much unnecessary anguish over this situation and is keen that it not happen to other principals.

6.4.2 Senior staff

LCPS has two senior staff members, Chris Topfer and Ed Glover who clearly complement Pete’s leadership. Christine (Chris) Topfer teaches Kindergarten and has for many years been a leader of teachers in the development of exemplary literacy teaching programs. Chris provides educational leadership for classes Kindergarten to Year 3 and coordinates the
school’s literacy program. Chris is also responsible the school’s professional learning program. For seven years Chris was a District K-6 literacy support teacher and a Department of Education Principal Education Review Officer responsible for moderation. In 2007 she was a member of the National Education Professional Associations group that developed a working paper on ‘Developing a twenty-first century school curriculum for Australian students’. She is currently the National Vice President of the Australian Literacy Educators’ Association. For five years Chris also lectured University of Tasmania Bachelor of Teaching students in Literacy in Primary and Middle Years.

Ed Glover has brought a range of experiences to his role at LCPS. He has been a principal of small rural schools and been acting principal of larger school settings. Ed teaches a Year5/6 class three days a week. He provides educational leadership across years 4 to 6 and is the manager of students with special needs. Ed coordinates the student reporting process and is the school’s super user or key person responsible for ensuring data is entered appropriately on the Department of Education’s Student Assessment and Reporting Information System (SARIS). Ed works with teachers in the formulation and enactment of moderation processes in numeracy and coordinates the National testing of literacy and numeracy in Years 3 and 5. Ed has an administrative role in timetable coordination, negotiating teachers’ duty rosters and acting as principal when Pete is out of the school on other duties. Among his more informal roles, Ed says he

tries to bring some fun into the staffroom and school and hands out tongue in cheek certificates every Christmas for “memorable events” that have happened during the year.

Both senior staff have extensive teaching experience, particularly in schools with students with high needs. Each is committed to building positive relationships with students, teachers and parents. The range of skills attributed to the senior staff was observed to be extensive and complementary.

Pete, Chris and Ed were asked what factors contributed to the success of LCPS. Pete responded by highlighting the primary focus on children:

That purity of having that focus on children whilst still recognising that teachers are dealing with their own children and elderly parents and their illnesses. You keep focussing on what’s good for kids . . . and that keeps the factionalist approach sometimes seen in schools out of it because that [factionalist approach] is a high or low moral ground type of argument.

We noted that Pete continually stressed at meetings that children provided the focus for what happens in the school. In addition, and as evidenced both during conversations between the principal and students and between the principal and senior staff, the principal clearly knew the family circumstances of each child and could provide an assessment of each child’s progress.

As the following statement from Pete indicates, in this priority focus on children the public purposes of education were as, if not more, important than private purposes of education.

We have some exceptionally bright children here who read and write very well but they aren’t always able to work with or listen to others. These children will never be good citizens unless we can help them develop these missing social skills. Part of our success comes from our ability to do this and, interestingly, it results in even better reading and writing.

Reinforcing this position is a statement in a recent LCPS’s submission to the DoE which noted:

At Lansdowne Crescent we intentionally build strong positive relationships across the whole school community. Literacy learning is embedded in this culture, connecting hearts, bodies and minds. ... Although our children achieve highly, we continue to strive for improvement. We know the success our
children achieve is due not only to increased teacher capacity and focused teaching but also to the breadth of opportunities children are offered that relate their learning to the world around them.

Pete also expressed the belief that there is a lot of luck in that, somehow, he has always managed to have high quality staff. He and his senior staff also stated that for a school, community or society to function properly, everyone needs to be given an opportunity. However, they are quick to point out that equity doesn’t mean the same for everybody. The senior staff acknowledges that the challenge in their school, where most children come from loving, supportive households, is to keep at the forefront of their minds the significant number of students who don’t. For example, Ed stated:

It was interesting with the debate over school camps. People said, initially, “Why bother?” Some of the kids go to Canada skiing, to France, on safari in Africa, go to New Zealand, or go to Fiji to swim. But we also have someone like [Freddy] who doesn’t have these experiences. We agreed that he deserves to have these experiences as much as any other child.

Ed describes the school’s sense of community in the following terms:

country school in the city. There is a huge sense of community here. People want to be here. It’s a positive place. People want to be positive. People want to be supportive. People want to help kids. This afternoon there were over a hundred parents and kids all just sitting around and organising their social calendars – at a quarter past three on a Monday afternoon!

Pete added that at a recent meeting of principals one mentioned with some pride that he had actually spoken to five parents on a particular day. Peter added that, by way of contrast, he and his senior staff speak to the large majority of the parent population EVERY day,

it’s just that they [the parents] are here!

Chris added, by way of example, that that very afternoon they’d had a group of parents near the Kindergarten talking about that area of the playground.

They just kept coming. There were fifteen in the end to share their opinions and ideas.

Pete explained that, as a staff, they try not to be competitive. They strongly believe that when professionals work together everyone starts lifting their game – bit by bit, all the time. He used the example of a teacher new to the school:

I was a bit nervous about a new teacher coming into the school. To my mind she was a bit of an unknown quantity – but – she just arrived here, we were all welcoming, she had lots of support and now she’s running with it. She’s telling me all the positives – it’s not as if I went out searching for them. However, I don’t want her to stand there telling us how good we are because the school is imperfect – we can always be better!

Chris believes that the sense of community evident in the school is so positive that it helps staff keep tensions and pressures in perspective.

Even if you have a bad day, or something happens in your life, or whatever, it never stays. It moves on. Everything is moving so fast, in a positive way, that no-one has time – even those suffering at home, or at school . . . . [It’s like going] for a ride down the river. It’s flowing so fast in a positive direction that they just get caught up and keep coming and contributing, even if they’re wrapped in cotton wool for a while, they come and contribute!

Pete cited the case of a teacher whose family circumstances placed her under enormous pressure. Everybody supported her. She would come to school where everyone gave her a hug and helped her in every way they could.

Although we’re very much focussed on children, that can only work if you [staff] are looking after each other. At the start of the year I said to staff, “We want to be family friendly and us three [senior staff] will do whatever we can to support you. Just because you are a teacher doesn’t mean you can’t go and
watch your kid run in an athletics race, or if your partner wants you with him because he’s having a
major operation – well, that’s where you’ve got to be. Forget school!” It’s not because school’s
unimportant. It’s like money in the bank, in a way, because if you are supporting people like that they
give you heaps back.

In comparison, some schools I’ve been to don’t understand this important point. At a school I was at
when a best friend’s father died and I asked the principal if I could go to the funeral he said, “No.” I
didn’t go. I should have just taken a ‘sickie’ and gone. I’m still upset about this after many, many years.
I left that school two months later because I wasn’t going to work with that principal any longer. I
thought it was a petty thing for him to do. It’s one of the reasons I have this philosophy now.

Chris experienced a similar event when working for a DoE school support unit. A close
family member died. She hadn’t seen him for two weeks because she was too scared to ask if
she could leave 40 minutes early at half past four. This she sees, with hindsight, as silly. She
strongly believes that:

When you treat people as professionals, that’s what you get back.

It was evident during repeated visits to the school that the principal knew the names of each
child, staff member, parent and community member and addressed each by name whenever
they met and/or conversed. There was constant evidence of a high level of rapport between
the principal and others with whom he came into contact. For example, visiting past students
were warmly greeted by name and were welcomed into the school and the teachers were
reassured at each staff meeting that if they had important family matters to attend to, support
was readily available. A number of teachers confirmed that they had been the beneficiaries of
that support, whether it had been the provision of time to attend their own child’s school for a
special occasion, or, when particular circumstances required the teacher to support a spouse,
parent or sick child. Staff consistently expressed the view in discussions with them that they
felt valued and important members of the family known as LCPS.

Pete believes that building trust within the school community, among staff, parents and
children, is important for LCPS’s success:

People so appreciate that trust. They’re not going to abuse it. It really feeds on itself after a while and in
the end it’s contagious.

Pete includes children among those that appreciate trust. He thinks that he is lucky in so many
ways to be working with the children in this school, who learn so easily. Pete thinks he’s like
a grandfather to these kids. He knows them all and takes an interest in what they do. He
thinks “that’s nice”.

Here we know the kids. We know a lot about their families and their interests – so, it’s like that lovely
grandparent, uncle or aunty who takes another little bit of interest.

While students spend most of their school day in class groups, the school has for many years
had the practice of grouping students in mixed age groups for particular activities, such as
daily fitness. Chris elaborates:

Mixing kids up for daily P.E. and having them work together is like a family and is part of building that
family feeling in the school. Another example is in literacy. Today we had Christa Bell, the author
working with the children. We had to make a decision. Do we give her to a couple of classes where the
teacher can follow up? In the end we decided to give her to Year 4, 5 and 6 children who were reluctant
writers and then to our high-flying writers - so she had two workshops. Although they were from Years
4, 5 and 6, they all worked together. They were just part of a small community. … I guess it’s partly
because they get so many experiences like that. It’s what happens here. It’s the way the children are
encultured.

Pete says that often it’s just a matter of catching the right moment. Chris believes that
teachers at the school are flexible and can alter at short notice their programs to accommodate
what “lands on the doorstep”. They capitalise on opportunities as they arise. She provided the example of one student who had been a very reluctant writer. He hadn’t been in the school for very long and “had a big chip on his shoulder”. The boy had failed in literacy all through his school life. However

we just caught him. Today he walked up to me and shook my hand and said, ‘I’ve done some [writing] but I don’t want to share it’.

Chris cited the example of another boy from after-school care who she had worked with that day. The boy showed her some writing he had just been doing and asked if it was ‘all right’. She responded:

“It’s fabulous! Share it with Christa.” [Yet] he was the one I thought was most disengaged about writing. He also said, “I’m writing a story at home on my laptop. I can’t get it off!” There you go! He was the one I thought was least engaged today. He’s going to be a writer now. That’s why we give that sort of opportunity.

Ed and Pete then added:

Ed
That’s what drives you nuts! We give kids all these opportunities, which is fantastic, and you forget that as a classroom teacher that it’s all part of their growth – it’s all part of what they are. There was a case two years ago when a high risk student walked in at two thirty in the afternoon and said, “I’m here Mr Glover”. She’d been at school all day engaged in all these different things but they all just happened to fall on a Thursday.

Pete
Yes, she was one of the most highly at risk children I’ve had at this school but she went on to win one of the academic awards last year at high school.

Ed
Nice girl.

Pete
She could easily have been lost!

Ed
This school gives kids opportunities and these are embraced by the kids.... Some of my kids after the presentation (by Christa) today said, “Mr Glover, we’re going to do some writing today.” I said, “No you’re not ‘cause you’re going to guitar”. The kids embrace the activities and opportunities and value the experience. LCPS teachers, in their own way, also value the opportunities children are given here.

The school is seen as an important part of the community. Ed believes that the relationship the school has with the community has meant that there is very little vandalism, or “stuff like that”. He sees the children wanting to look after the school, to protect the school. In contrast to some communities in which he has taught, Ed believes that the relationship this community and the kids have with the school is very positive. He cited the case of a child who was home schooled until this year and within three weeks of her enrolment at the school the family is going to bring their second child to school. Pete had met with the mother who had said that she was having difficulty “letting go”, but had seen what the school could do. His response was:

‘You don’t have to let go. Our philosophy is that you can come and join us. We can find you something to do.’ … She was so relieved!

“Lighting the fire within”, added Chris pointing out that the staff saw literacy as including music, art, robotics and so much more (expanded in a later sub-section).

Pete strongly expressed the view that,
If we allow politicians to keep “dumbing” down what we do in government schools by severely limiting their priorities to areas such as literacy and numeracy, we won’t have a government school system – it’ll disappear!

There is a high level of congruence between the stated philosophy of the school and its enactment. Chris summarises this as “respectful and meaningful education”. Pete described it in the following way:

You pick up from being in the staffroom that there’s this real honesty in people. There’s a lot of humour — you can say a lot of things in jest. You can’t say things and not do them. There are people who just wouldn’t let you get away with it! We have a beautiful statement about equity. If we weren’t following it lots of teachers would say, “Stop! Hang on! Think about this!”

Sometimes you can get excited about something and think you are doing the right thing, and you’re not! That’s another strength of our school – the three of us come at things from such different angles that we are just not pushing the ‘party line’. In any conversation we have here we have a 360 degree view of things.

In fact, I know my gaps, my weaknesses, and when senior staff was appointed we looked for people who would fill in those gaps.

There is also a refreshing acknowledgement among the senior staff that tensions can still arise when carrying out their roles and duties. They are very conscious of who does what. Pete is adamant that role clarity is important, especially for upcoming activities, and who has carriage and responsibility for each activity. He knows that in something as complex as a school the principal doesn’t always get that right. He considers that although a school has high levels of complexity they haven’t room for overlap either. The senior staff may all talk about a particular topic, but as Pete states:

the staff has a need to know who is in charge of that bit, and that bit. This is most important in a school of some 330 students and nearly fifty staff [due to the many part-time staff]. Ineffective communication can potentially create a disaster.

6.4.3 Review

What have we so far learnt about LCPS and their understanding of the public purposes of education and their enactment? Evidence from the school’s profile and from and about the principal and senior teachers would suggest that public purposes of education are a crucial part of an excellent school. Given its earlier strong support for ELs, LCPS understood these public purposes to include:

- strong focus on social responsibility involving building social capital,
- valuing diversity and
- acting democratically.

LCPS sees that everyone should have the opportunity to participate and contribute in a wide range of areas. These understandings are reflected in the school’s mission, goals and motto as well as the feedback from the principal and senior staff. These understandings strongly embrace:

- democracy,
- equity,
- social and community development (including trust, respect, care and consideration of others, cooperation among all, and
- an acceptance of responsibility, including for environmental sustainability) and empowerment.

There is a high level of congruence between these understandings of public purposes and the enactment (what is done) in the school. The major strategies used to advance these purposes could be seen as including:
Building a sense of community that values quality relationships that feature open lines of communication, high levels of trust, openness and honesty among staff, students and parents, and one in which each feels a sense of belonging and an ability to fully involved in working and learning together;

- A focus on children, knowing the names and backgrounds of each student and providing a wide and rich range of learning opportunities, including in areas such as literacy;
- Having high expectations and clarity of purpose (sometimes multiple purposes), including a clear set of expectations for each learning activity;
- Being flexible and using mixed age groupings, as appropriate, to engender caring, sharing and mentoring among and between students as well as being able to seize the moment;
- Actively providing leadership roles and opportunities of increasing importance and complexity for students to aspire to as they progress through the school;
- Obtaining and developing high quality, empowered staff, who have leadership distributed to them, are involved in decision making based on evidence and know they are valued and viewed as professionals working together - supporting and complementing each other;
- Maintaining a positive approach and keeping areas of tension in perspective;
- The principal, senior staff and teachers having sustained, quality contact with the profession and a high number of parents and other individuals and groups in the community;
- Developing and sustaining, in a slow and measured way, a culture of continuous improvement.

Factors seen to help in the realisation of these public purposes include:

- A principal and senior staff who strongly espouses and act on public purposes;
- An empowered professional staff providing a rich educational environment that focuses on all children;
- Collegial teams and deprivatisation of practice;
- Targeted, owned, quality professional development;
- A supportive, engaged, partnered community;
- A quality physical environment;
- A state curriculum that gives priority to public purposes (e.g. ELs).

Factors seen as hindering the realisation of public purposes include (many by implication):

- An unsympathetic principal;
- A disempowered professional staff;
- A lack of teamwork and privatisation of practice;
- An unsupportive community;
- A narrow state curriculum and politicians and a DoE that give priority to a very narrow set of school outcomes, typically literacy and numeracy;
- Children without social skills, including some of the most gifted.

In order to ‘test’ these emerging conclusions on public purposes and their enactment at LCPS, the case study now turns to the views of, and evidence about, others in the school, that is, the teachers, students, and parents and wider community members.
6.4.4 Teachers

High levels of respect and rapport were observed between the principal and teachers, and among teachers. Teachers newly appointed to the school reported that when visiting the school for the first time they were told by others on the school staff that, “You will enjoy it here!” They did. Teachers have been quick to emphasise that their colleagues were always prepared to offer support and assistance with planning programs, and provided guidance in identifying appropriate teaching and learning strategies most appropriate for particular students. Such high levels of collegiality among teachers were strongly encouraged and enacted by the principal and senior staff.

The supportive nature of this LCPS’s environment was consistently noticeable during each visit to the school, as exemplified in the following teacher comments:

- Everyone is supportive of each other. You’re looked after. People really care and [the principal] is just the same.
- You are told you are appreciated. You are really appreciated by each other and by [the principal].
- If you’ve got a leader who appreciates what you do, who tries to take the pressure off you so that you can just get on with the job that you want to do with the children. [When we have a leader] who also says “You look a bit tired today, I’ll go out and do your duty”, then we all feel that we can do that for other people as well.
- You are always listened to.
- I think we’re a whole staff. There is no segregation of staff. Cleaners, office, teachers – we’re all one!
- All are treated equally, in a professional manner.
- It’s not only about being a colleague as there are personal friendships here and a lot of support, not only for things that happen in school but for people’s health and well-being generally. People are there for you all the time.

The care and concern for each other has clearly resulted in a high level of commitment to the task of teaching. This, together with the resources such as the range of expertise and experience available within staff, enables an enthusiastic, high-energy ‘can-do’ approach to teaching, as reflected in the following teacher comments:

- Teachers are highly motivated here.
- We are a group with a lot of experience and are able to cope [with children’s different needs]. If someone doesn’t cope we are willing to share. We can cater for everyone because there is a pool of intelligence [among staff] that we can draw upon.

There is a clear de-privatisation of teaching practice with teachers noting that:

- Colleagues are always prepared to offer support and assistance with planning programs and providing guidance in identifying appropriate teaching and learning strategies for particular students
- I often work with a lot of different teachers and I’ve been astounded at the quality of the communication … and how well we work together.

In respect of system curriculum pressures, teachers are clear that

- We know where we are going and take from curriculum and other system documents what we can use and what is consistent with where we are going.

Also, as noted by numbers of staff, the school had been

- committed to implementing the Essential Learnings Curriculum [with its strong public purposes agenda].

Decision making within the school was observed to be a participatory process, being very inclusive of teachers and support staff. This was particularly evident during staff meetings. Prospective agendas for staff meetings were placed on the staffroom notice board many days prior to the meeting. Staff was invited to add and prioritise items for inclusion at the next
meeting. Each attendee at the meetings was asked in turn, and individually, if they wished to add information, or offer an opinion about any of the agenda items during the meeting proceedings.

As the following teacher’s comment illustrates, the fact that teachers themselves were valued and cared for has had a flow on effect to a valuing and appreciating the contribution of parents.

- Parents are really supportive.

Many of the teaching staff were part time or had dual roles within the school. This necessitated the use of two teachers teaching in tandem on the one class group. There are several tandem teaching teams in the school. A high level of communication between tandem teacher team members was observed to be necessary to ensure that the transition from one teacher to another was as seamless as possible. The comment that follow is indicative of how well such teams function in the school:

- I often work with a lot of different teachers and I’ve been astounded at the quality of the communication between the two members of the tandem, how well they work together and how well they communicate about the needs of the children in their class. I don’t think I’ve ever worked in a school where the tandems have worked so well. A couple of them have said that they’ve worked together for a long time.

As the following representative teacher statement indicates, students are also held in high regard by teachers:

- The kids are all pretty nice here. They’ve got a nice way about them.

Support for children by children is something that the staff of the school actively fosters in students and is a feature of how the school operates. An important aspect of the student peer support system is that older students are assigned to the kindergarten, preparatory and students new to the school to help induct these students into LCPS. Peers provide a supportive service to that student until he or she feels confident enough for that friendly support to be progressively withdrawn. The peer support system was observed to promote caring and sharing and a “we are a family” approach across the year levels.

The development of leadership skills and a spirit of cooperation in and among students is exemplified by and enacted during the daily fitness program (described below). However, teachers were quick to emphasise that the daily fitness program was but one of many programs. They hastened to advise that older kids are supportive of younger kids in the playground and that:

- We have book buddies as well.
- We have whole school assemblies in which the younger ones can see what the older ones can do, what they can aspire to.

The multiple, layering of purpose can be observed in the enactment of all of the school’s teaching and learning programs, as seen, for example, in the school’s literacy program about which it has stated:

At Lansdowne Crescent we intentionally build strong positive relationships across the whole school community. Literacy learning is embedded in this culture, connecting hearts, bodies and minds.

As a result of its very high performance on the 2008 National Assessment Program Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN), LCPS was invited by the DoE to make a submission as to why it should be one of four schools to represent Tasmania at the Australian Education Ministers’ First Biennial Forum to be held in December 2008, to showcase innovation and excellence in school education in the areas of evidence-based approaches to low socio-economic status,
school workforce development, and literacy and numeracy. Two schools were subsequently successful, including LCPS. The forum is to be held at the Melbourne Cricket Ground in Melbourne. It was noted in the submission that LCPS’s whole school literacy plan had been used as an exemplary model across the state and additionally, that the writing scope and sequence document was shared across the system. The school’s submission included the fact that the school magazine, produced and published each term by Year 6 students, had won a national award.

The school’s literacy plan is underpinned by the following beliefs:

- Literacy involves the mastery of skills and practices which enable us to communicate through spoken language, print and multimedia in a variety of situations;
- All children can be successful literacy learners;
- Engagement, motivation and enjoyment are essential for literacy learning;
- Meaningful, relevant, flexible and worthwhile curriculum opportunities enhance literacy learning;
- The literacy demands of contemporary life are changing and are now characterised by multi-modal tasks.

Contributing to the high performance of students is the school’s stated model for value adding to literacy outcomes, considered to be possible in any setting. The model contains the notion of using data to support change, is about building teacher capacity, focuses on developing a whole school culture for professional learning, and targets learning opportunities to individual needs. Three factors the school considered to be important in this process are: maintaining a positive outlook, building supportive relationships and having high expectations for all children. The motivation and engagement for learning in LCPS is triggered through real life experiences and though varying from context to context, remains central.

Other examples of this multiple layering of priorities follow from the areas of music, daily fitness and writing for the school magazine (see the ‘students’ sub-section). Each example shows:

- Emphasis on the empowerment of students;
- Extensive use of mixed ability and age groupings;
- Extensive layering of purposes, for example, for enjoyment, participation, appropriate behaviour, leadership and skill development in oral and written language.
- There is an increased emphasis in these curricula from Kindergarten through to Year 6 in the public as compared with the private purposes of education and their enactment, especially in the leadership opportunities provided.

The music teacher, at an initial staff meeting, outlined to class teachers the extent and scope of a full and vital music program for the year that included the following elements:

- Choirs
- Strings classes
- Percussion classes
- 4 year 6 choir leaders
- Lunch time recitals by professional individuals and groups
- Audience etiquette
- Attending Tasmanian Symphony Orchestra recitals
- Learning to write performance reviews

The music program was observed to be typical of the multiple layering of purposes evident in the learning programs conducted by teachers and highlighted the multiple opportunities for,
and levels of student participation. The first layer was the opportunity to enjoy a range of musical activities and experiences as a participant in choirs, strings and percussion groups. The second layer included that of performer at school and community functions and learning the core skills of presentation and behaviour in such circumstances. A third layer was that of learning and practising to be a member of an audience through attendance at, for example, lunchtime recitals in the school auditorium or attending Tasmanian Symphony Orchestra recitals. A fourth layer, for older students, was the practice of learning to write performance reviews following presentations such as the Symphony Orchestra recitals. A fifth layer was the opportunity for students in years four and six to become choir leaders and practice the skills of leading, working and communicating with their peers.

Whilst many schools often achieve multiple goals when implementing learning programs, LCPS staff appears to deliberately intervene in the learning process to ensure that the layering of purpose described above is an essential component of enactment.

The layering of purpose and the development of leadership skills was also observed during the daily fitness classes conducted by year six students across all grades from Prep to Year 6. The program has been running for ten years and therefore has long been established as part of the school’s culture. The school has been fortunate in that it has maintained the same part-time physical education teacher for that period.

In summary, key elements of the daily fitness program are:

- 20 minutes a day;
- Year 6 students are trained to lead ten groups;
- Groups are mixed – year 1s to yr 6s;
- Prep classes operate as discrete units;
- Year 6 students began participating in the daily fitness program when they were in Prep class;
- Year 5 students are leaders-in-waiting;
- Kindergarten classes commence in term 3 with leaders from Year 5;
- Activities change on a half term basis to maintain freshness;
- A teacher joins each group and was observed to join in;
- Student leaders are evaluated by the teachers in each group;
- Students were participating fully and enthusiastically;
- The PE teacher evaluates the physical development of each student in the school twice yearly;
- Teachers are most supportive of the daily PE program and see it as an important aspect of the school’s learning program; and
- In addition to daily fitness classes, 93% of students participate in organised sports – many in multiple sports.

When asked about the multiple layered purposes evident in each learning activity, such as those described above in the music and daily fitness programs, the following comments were received:

- A very wise colleague said to me, “Wherever you teach, make sure you want to go there”. People put in the effort because they want to be here. The thing that enables us to do these things is the fact that we don’t have to spend a lot of time dealing with the management issues that colleagues in other schools have to do. This year we had 14 students put their hand up to be president of the Student Representative Council (SRC), we had 11 students put their hand up to be secretary of the SRC. It’s a cultural thing, it’s inculcated into the school, somehow.
- It’s a responsibility thing that we all work at; a rights and responsibility thing. It’s a respect for one another. It’s all linked.
- The kids let us do that. The kids let us do the daily fitness. The kids let us do the Tasmanian Symphony Orchestra [TSO] critique, because we can go to the TSO confident that the kids can sit there. We don’t have to be continually watching kids and saying, “Don’t ….” or “.Put that kid
down!” There is none of that stuff. … It’s a part of why we can do what we do and why we can generate the environment and the feel that the school has.

- The parents endorse the teachers, the programs and everything. The whole thing becomes a partnership between home and school, which is ideal.
- When you are not having to plan and plan and plan to please an individual [the principal], as you do in some schools, when you know you are supported by your principal, when you know the parent body is focussed, it’s not hard to do.
- When you know that 99% of the interactions you have with parents are going to be positive, and they have a question to ask, that’s what’s asked – the question. We had six parents who went on an excursion today and every one of those I engaged in informal conversation. It’s about encouraging that partnership. People out there are very perceptive. I’ve had this thing about … this school -while having all these layers and kids involved is great, it does create a very, very busy school environment, especially for the upper primaries. It is fantastic that the kids here are given so many leadership opportunities but we only have the kids in our class (Year 6) for eight and a half hours, the whole class, the whole thirty-one of them. I was getting a bit paranoid about that. Then I was speaking to a parent at parent/teacher meeting and their take on it was, “It’s great that in Year 6 our child is given all these leadership opportunities that they wouldn’t otherwise get in any other school. We understand therefore that in the academic program an allowance has to made”. They understand! It took so much pressure off me! I thought, well if that’s how that person is thinking and they have a high profile in the school, fantastic! It’s a community thing. For a city school it still has a huge sense of community. Everything we do here is well supported. For example, you raise $25000 at a fair in four hours. People come from everywhere. It is a community school within the city! It’s just great to be in such a positive atmosphere. Everyone’s positive!

In summary, teachers reinforce many of the principal and senior staff’s view of LCPS. They see it as a school giving high priority to the public purposes of education through being a community of professional learners. They think of the school as an extended family in which people are valued and cared for. Teachers say they are continually reminded through high quality communication by the principal and their peers that they are appreciated. Because of this sense of being valued, teachers expressed the belief that they are better able to do the job of teaching. The staff has very high expectations and see that there are fewer pressures to detract them from their primary task. All staff has the opportunity to participate in school decision-making processes. Staff are treated equally and in a professional manner. Teachers also feel supported by parents and consider themselves as partners in the provision of educational opportunity. As a consequence, teachers believe they are highly motivated and were observed to take a very professional, ‘can do’ approach to teaching. This was no where better illustrated than in the multiple, layering of purpose and use of mixed ability and age groupings observed in the enactment of many of the school’s teaching and learning programs. It was also observed in teachers’ confidence and ability to only take from system documentation what they can use and what was consistent with the already agreed upon direction for the school. Teachers used evidence to support change. Our observations led us to conclude that this professional, confident, positive attitude observed in teachers clearly permeated through to the students.

6.4.5 Students

Students perceptions of LCPS have been derived from observations made by the researchers and from comments reported by students in the school magazine and other documents held by the school.

Many students who were leaving the school at the end of their primary school years in December 2007 noted that the building of long-term friendships whilst attending the school was of great importance to them:

- I have made friendships that will last a lifetime.
- I remember when I first came to this school my friend Mischa showed me where to put my bag. …. I met Harrison in grade 4. I met Noah in grade 5. I met Oliver and Thomas in grade six.
- I remember when Hugh and I became friends.
- My friends are awesome and the teachers are great here.
- I love all the friends and all the teachers I’ve met.
From these and other comments made in their farewell to the school it is evident that students experience positive relationships with their teachers, for example one student wrote:

- The teachers are great and have made learning fun.

Students describe their experiences at the school in glowing terms and recommend others go to LCPS:

- I’ve been to four different schools and Lansdowne is certainly at the ‘top of the charts’.
- Send your kids here!

The active, participatory, leadership roles that students are engaged in throughout their time in this school contribute to student’s belief in themselves and their capacity to become engaged in the opportunities provided by the school. For example, in 2008 14 students put their hands up to be president and 11 to be secretary of the Student Representative Council. The following representative quotes express students’ awareness and appreciation of the opportunities the school provided them:

- I have been given so many opportunities and experiences.
- I loved being a daily fitness leader; it was great to see so much enthusiasm in the kids! There have been so many great opportunities and experiences. I loved being a House Captain. I was so proud of my house, Wattle. I will miss [this school] greatly. I have wonderful memories of my time here.
- I love the art, Italian, Indonesian, the kitchen corner, and camp.
- I have really enjoyed all my years at this school. I can still remember the things we did in Kinder like painting and playing most of the time. As I went up the grades we started doing more work until Grade 2 when we started doing harder maths. I have enjoyed all the excursions we have been on and science activities. I’m looking forward to high school but will miss all my friends.
- In my time here I have been given a lot of opportunities like being House Captain and School Captain and being involved in all the competitions and excursions. Over all, I think I have had a great time.

Evidence suggests that Year 6 students have a sense of loss on leaving the school and acknowledge that the Year 5 students, as their successors, will set the example and inherit the leadership responsibilities in the following year. That is expected because that’s the way things happen in this school.

- I can tell the grade fives will be great leaders of the school next year. I have learnt so much [at this school] and now I have to say goodbye – miss you guys!

High numbers of past students come back to and help out when secondary schools are in recess.

The principal was observed to regularly work in classrooms and accompany students and teachers on each class excursion and camp, irrespective of the ages of students in participating class groups. During conversations with him, Pete indicated that he saw his commitment in classrooms and being involved with class excursions as integral to his role. These excursions gave him the opportunity to work alongside teachers and students, thus building his knowledge, appreciation and understanding of each.

Students from past years who attended the meet-the-teacher and barbecue for parents, were observed to be warmly greeted by the principal, other adults and former schoolmates. High levels of mutual support, respect and approachability among students, parents and staff were observed. Principal and staff clearly demonstrated their ongoing capacity to relate to and connect with the broader school community.

Similar observations were recorded during the school athletics carnival that was attended by large numbers of parents, grandparents and/or carers. Pete, as the announcer, called each child by name, and similarly, acknowledged the presence of parents and grandparents. Of particular
note at the carnival was that all students participated, including a young child with Downes Syndrome. Each child was valued and supported by their peers and teachers and urged on by visiting adults.

There was evidence to suggest that students have an expectation that they will be given added responsibility as they progress through the school. Students know that when they reach Year 6, for example, they will be the leaders of the daily fitness program. It is important to note that the Year 6 leaders plan their program with the Physical Education (PE) teacher and then take full responsibility for the delivery to other classes, particularly as the PE teacher is only present in the school two to three days per week. The class teachers join fitness groups but stay in the background.

Year 5 students were observed to be leaders in waiting. These students looked forward to term three when they would have the opportunity to lead the Kindergarten students in a daily fitness program as preparation for their Year 6 roles. Apart from developing the skills required to successfully participate in each activity, plus the skills of leadership and ‘followership’, it was observed that during the daily fitness program there is also the stated intent to develop positive and caring relationships among students and between teachers and students. The daily fitness groups are comprised of mixed ages of children and include students from each of the classes, Years 1 to 6. Students are encouraged to assist and support each other.

An observed outcome of the daily fitness program is that students know the names of most of the other children in the school. Similarly, class teachers know the names of students in all other classes. This familiarity results in the high levels of caring, compassion and support for each other transcending class groups and year levels.

‘The Crescent’ is an extremely high quality, professionally printed, school magazine that is produced by Year 6 students each term, that is, three times per year. The magazine is an excellent record of the life of the school and portrays the multiple facets of school life. Circulation of the magazine is not restricted to the local community as an article contained photos of the publication being read in Maine, USA; Canberra, South Australia and Finland. Three different editorial teams produce the magazine each year, one for each term. Participation is voluntary. Each term the positions of editor and reporters are advertised and students are invited to apply. The following is an example of one student’s application for the position of editor:

I would be a good editor because I would be committed and organised. I would give up my spare time on working on the magazine. I would really like to be the editor because this is my last year and I would love the opportunity to really help my school and to get the most out of my last year in primary school. If you pick me as editor I promise that I will do my best to help make one of the best magazines ever!

The storywriter and the photographer are acknowledged at the end of each article in the magazine. The contents include an editorial, photographs of the editorial committee, a note from the principal, book reviews, accounts of experiences on school excursions, sports reports, interviews with visiting authors, and items perceived to be of interest to the school community. In one magazine there was an extremely touching and sensitive article ‘In Remembrance of Rhys’, a student who had passed away earlier that term.

It is evident that there is a high level of expectation that children’s writing will be such that it is appropriate for an audience much wider than that of the Year 6 classroom. There is an
emphasis on presentation with care taken on layout and format, to achieve a balance of print and photographs and to create pages that are of interest to the reader. The reporting team practice interview techniques by interviewing visitors to the school, parents and fellow students. They then learn to write an article suitable for publication. Throughout the process, students enhance their skills of communication. In brief, the magazine presents as an opportunity for students to write for a purpose, in a meaningful context.

An analysis of the Term 3, 2007, copies of the school magazine, provides insights into the many public purposes of education enacted in the school. For example, the editor and his assistant editor claim that the magazine has been:

A terrific opportunity to work on the Editorial Committee and has given us heaps of skills for later life such as editing, photography and learning to work as a member of a team.

Also included in the Editorial is the notion of being task oriented, working to a deadline and reward for effort:

Thanks to the Editorial Committee for working so hard to get the magazine completed on time. Everyone put in so much time and effort and it has been great to watch. It has been really hard work but it has all paid off in the end.

Public acknowledgement for the achievement of the editorial committee in successfully compiling the eleventh edition of the Crescent Magazine was made by the principal in his ‘From the Principal’ segment. He describes the committee as:

A motivated and talented group of young journalists and the result is a highly readable and informative magazine celebrating another term full of highlights.

The principal has demonstrated a strong commitment to communicating meaningfully and effectively with the school community. He encourages and provides opportunities for students to do likewise. Such is the prestige with which the magazine is held, the school has seen fit to allocate a teacher for the equivalent of half a day per week to mentor the editorial team. That teacher’s primary role is to advise and assist students, particularly, with their skill development in the presentation and communication of ideas.

Many of the magazine articles highlight the public purposes of education, for example in relation to an appreciation of and participation in the arts. The school provides a number of opportunities for such student participation. The Crescent Magazine reported that two students had danced in the Hobart production of the musical Cats. They wanted to be in the performance because

they thought it would be a good experience and that it would be really fun.

Afterwards the girls said that

The experience was really good for them because they learnt so much and had made lots of friends.

The performance of the two girls was also reviewed by some of their classmates. The inclusion of this article in the ‘Crescent’ is further evidence of the schools capacity to connect with the broader community and to enable students to utilise their talents and explore their potential as individuals.

A second example is provided by an article on the Prep classes visit to Mount Wellington where students found out about:

[The mountain’s] importance with regard to water, wildlife and recreation. They discovered that [they] have a responsibility to help keep the mountain environment safe, clean and natural.
A third example is the story about Grade 3 students “reliving history” during a school camp. The students obtained a practical insight into the lives of their forebears and enabled them to connect with the past in order to make history ‘live’ and meaningful. The camp presented as an Activity Museum and gave students experiences such as washing clothes in a wash trough and wringing clothes using a mangle. Four additional activities were making bread, churning butter, making wax candles and spinning wool. The experience enabled students to make meaningful comparisons between then and now, to understand how living in a community has changed over the years. As city students they fed a variety of animals and can understand better the differences between city and country life.

A fourth example relates to students gaining an understanding of the different roles people have to ensure members of the community are healthy and safe. Following a fire safety program conducted in the school, in which all classes participated in five sessions with ‘Firefighter Barry”, Barry was interviewed by reporters from the Crescent Magazine. The article provides insights into Barry’s personal life, what it means to actually fight a fire and suggested practical ways of making the reader’s home fire-safe. Apart from describing the role of the fire service in the community several students were interviewed concerning the knowledge they had gained from the classes with Barry. One such report stated:

The most important thing I learnt from Fire Fighter Barry was that speed is everything. Get out of the burning building as quickly as possible. But Never Crawl Like an Army Commando! Gasses fall to the floor and you breathe them in if you’re that close to the floor. So crawl on your hands and knees.

A final example relates to an article on Literacy and Numeracy Week. It also provides an indicator as to how well teachers make these, often perceived as mundane subjects, ‘live’ in the hearts and minds of LCPS students. The article heading is catchy:

Sizzling Literacy and Numeracy Week
Do you think you are going to get a perfect job and earn lots of money? This won’t happen unless you have good literacy and numeracy skills. At Lansdowne the kids have been all ears listening to people speak about literacy and numeracy, knowing that when they are older they will have to know a lot about it to get a snazzy job.

One of the activities during the week was that everyone in the school would ‘drop everything and write’ for fifteen minutes at 10.30 a.m. each day. Examples of how this school connects with its community to promote and engage students in literacy and numeracy activities are evident in the following extract:

Well known children’s author, Margaret Wild, came to our school to talk to preps and grade two class about literacy. We also had fifteen parents come to the school to talk about how literacy is used in their work and at home. This week was important for the children to learn that literacy will help you when you are at home as well as when you are at work. The parent speakers have jobs where literacy skills are important. We had nurses, editors, parents who are running a business, teachers, pharmacists and authors. The topics included working as an editor, writing job resumes, creating science reports, running a business, supporting restorative justice, learning copperplate handwriting, nursing, writing a journal and working in a pharmacy. Our school had an assembly and that’s where[the] student and editor gave a fascinating presentation about the difficult and lengthy process involved in producing the school’s term two magazine. Students also listened to grade
three radio plays. These plays were written and recorded by the grade three students with the help of writer in residence, Sam Adams. During the assembly we recognised our community tutors for their contribution to our school. Afterwards, the whole school enjoyed some sizzling bbq sausages. Mmmmmm.

A further example of the enactment of the public purposes in education is embodied in the work of the Student Council. This council meets once a month in the school library. The meetings are under the supervision of a senior teacher whom councillors say, does a pretty good job, sitting around listening and keeping everything under control.

Each of the Prep to Year 6 classes elects a male and female class representative to council. Grade 6s, being the senior students have more. Each representative is required to make notes during the meeting and then take ideas and suggestions with their classmates upon their return to class. Students are clearly learning to operate in a democratic way. They also commit some time raising money for the benefit of people in less fortunate circumstances. Whilst the goal for 2007 was to raise $950 for an outdoor chess table (see photo), it was noted that $294 from the total raised ($1,244) will go to the Red Cross to help the African people in Sudan.

Regular school assemblies are also conducted and provide yet another example of a school activity that had as its underlying purpose the empowerment of students within a community. These assemblies are run, in turn, by groups of three students from Year 6. The assemblies represent yet another opportunity for students to experience an up-front leadership role. The role demands that they negotiate with teachers the content of the assembly then to plan the assembly program. Students from classes presenting information or an item display and talk about the work done in the period leading up to the assembly. Teachers exercise care in determining the recipients of the Lansdowne Awards for selected students in their classroom, as the awards are not given lightly. Students are proud to receive these awards as they represent a public acknowledgement that, as individuals, they have achieved something special. The assembly leaders invite the principal to participate in the assembly.

All is not left to chance, however, as the principal was observed to coach assembly leaders. He asked each group what they would need to do for the assembly to run successfully. The coaching/mentoring points that the principal explored included:

- Encouraging students to speak up, speak clearly - not too fast, and to use silence and pause to gain attention;
- Collecting Lansdowne Awards (min of 2 per class) from teachers and compiling a list of recipients for publishing in the school newsletter;
- Procedures for setting up the assembly room;
- Showing leaders how to hold and use a microphone; and
- The participation of student leaders in a trial run on the morning of the assembly.

All Year 6 students are given the opportunity to lead at least one school assembly during their final year at primary school. Observations made during assemblies confirmed that the leaders conducted them in a competent and efficient manner and that the student audience and those students/classes presenting items conducted themselves in an exemplary manner.

In summary, there is a strong expectation on the part of teachers that students in this school will achieve their highest level in a wide range of areas, including the social. Students believe they are empowered and that the school fosters leadership attributes in them as they progress through the school. Students are given, appreciate, indeed, expect, increasing levels of responsibility. Students enjoy the range of learning opportunities provided by teachers. But, most of all, students value the friendships of their peers and the high quality relationships experienced among them and their teachers.
Parents made exceptionally positive comments concerning the helpful and supportive attitude of the principal, the care and concern shown by staff towards their children and the quality relationships developed among all persons associated with the school.

The breadth of benefits the children derive from attending the school are encapsulated in the following representative and perceptive parental comments:

- [My kids] don’t just come to school and go into a classroom. They come to school and get to make decisions, and talk about, not just things with the teachers and the principal, but with other kids. … it’s because of the attitude here, the way things are gone about … where the kids have a sense of being a part of everything that’s happening.
- The kids have this sense of freedom yet they know there are boundaries. They still know what is O.K. and what is not O.K..
- [They receive] a very good education – not just academic – they’re set up for life – a good grounding for any challenges they may have to face when they are older.
- [They receive] a very good education – not just academic – they’re set up for life – a good grounding for any challenges they may have to face when they are older.
- There is a valuing by students of who they are and what they can do – not necessarily just for academic achievement. The school celebrates all sorts of things kids achieve - whether its out there doing daily PE or a Grade 6 student caring for a Prep child. Those things are valued as much as winning a race or winning a science competition. … We have the Lansdowne Award which is handed out in assembly. Teachers nominate students for particular things, all sorts of things, like being kind to someone or for sharing, or painting a lovely picture, or whatever – I really like that holistic type of education, it’s not just about top academic achievement.
- There’s a whole range of opportunities– like daily fitness, or the music, or the sports – there’re so many wonderful opportunities students can tap into if they want to. On the other side, if there is a problem it’s responded to.

Parents made particular comment about the positive and high quality relationships that they and their children experience in the school. The fact that all are working together toward a common end-point is greatly appreciated. Aspects of this view are sampled in the comments below:

- There is a sense that everybody knows where everyone’s at and what they are doing. Also there’s a sense of [everyone] working together. It’s not a system that we’re forcing on kids. It’s not something we’re doing to them – we’re actually doing it WITH them.
- There’s a sense in the school that it’s the principal, teachers, parents and the children working together.
- There’s a really positive air, everywhere.
- It’s that openness to listen and spend the time.
- Teachers always know [about our children] because they communicate so well with each other.
- I did classroom help just recently. [The teachers] try to encourage you. They make use of parents who are an obvious resource.

One parent was able to make a comparison between LCPS and a school her children had recently attended in Melbourne:

- [In Melbourne] there were classes with two teachers in the classroom … and many parents would go, “Oh no, my child’s in a class with two teachers!” Here, it’s really interesting because I don’t have that concern any more. The teachers here work together and complement each other - like my eldest had two teachers. One is stricter and pushed her a little harder. The other is a bit kinder and gentle and warm and fuzzy. I thought, well, she gets both her needs met through the course of the week. … They know what’s going on and discuss what’s happening with the child. When something is happening in the playground, or with their schooling needs, I know that when the next teacher comes on, they always know because they communicate so well with each other – whereas in the Melbourne school this didn’t happen and it was seen as a real negative.

Parents also expressed their appreciation of both the many leadership opportunities teachers give students and the manner in which classes are mixed for some activities resulting in the development of caring and supportive relationships between older and younger students. The mentoring of students through the peer support program is a particular example of this:
When my daughter was in Kinder or Prep she didn’t like things out of the ordinary. Her peer support person was a really ‘way-out’ girl and it was the best combination you could ever get. The things that she [my daughter] learnt from that Grade 6 student was more valuable than anything we could ever have taught her, that is, it was O.K. to be different. You don’t have to look like everyone else. You don’t have to do the things and conventions because everyone else does. This girl was very kind and loving. That peer support program is fantastic.

Parents acknowledged that in recent years the school’s community had become more middle-class. Whilst there were concerns that their children had limited opportunities to mix with less advantaged children they were optimistic that their children had experienced the grounding to enable them to become caring citizens, as evidenced by the following exchange:

- There aren’t many disadvantaged children at this school. There are some, I know. What do you think?
- We are middle class and becoming more so than we were in the past.
- Parents ask for more, receive more, expect more.
- We might be in a position to give more too. The kids are benefiting from that. I think it’s a positive for our children.
- Hopefully we’re raising caring children who learn leadership skills, have acted as a buddy and can think past themselves.

The principal is held in exceptionally high esteem by parents, as illustrated by the following comment.

- When you talk to the principal he says, ‘What fantastic parents!’, and that to him is very important, whereas we say, “What a fantastic principal!”

Parents articulated the view that whilst the principal had many things to do in his role, when he met with them they felt that they were the centre of his attention.

- There has never been a moment when we’ve been asked to come back or make another time, or, ‘It’s not convenient’, or, ‘It’s too hard’, or, . . . What the staff, and particularly [the principal], put into our children – my kids – is almost beyond what you would expect!
- The first time I came to the school I met [the principal] and he spent the whole morning showing me around the school. Then he said, “I’m just going to daily fitness – you can join me if you want, or you can have a look around.” - It’s that open-ness, to listen and spend the time! This is a really big factor. Every time I’ve had a question, especially with [the principal], he’s right there. He manages to make you feel like he’s not doing anything else important, - that you are the number one priority. It’s pretty amazing! When you think about how many big issues he would be working with, he makes you feel that you are the only one that’s really important, in that moment.
- I’ll just concur with the two previous speakers. We moved out from England three and a half years ago. We came to this area by accident. Strangely enough, this was the only school we ever looked at. We were so impressed with [the principal], when we met him. He knew the name of every child who walked past – we were just astonished – and they all knew him. He was friendly to us and everybody else. We thought, well, we’re not bothering to look anywhere else, we need to find a house nearby!

Parents expressed high levels of satisfaction with and appreciation of the principal committing substantial amounts of his time to participating in class activities and excursions. Whilst parents acknowledged that participation enabled him to get to know each child as an individual being in his or her own right some expressed concern for his well-being.

- I’m sure [the principal] really enjoys [going on excursions], but how he juggles his diary to fit all these things in is amazing!
- I always worry about the pressure he puts himself under. I just remembered – I don’t know if you are aware of the Grade 6 ‘right of passage’, so to speak, that [the principal] started at the end of the year. In Grade 6 in the last couple of weeks of school he offers to take anyone who would like to go…. They got buses to the top of Mt Wellington and then spent all day walking to Lansdowne Crescent. It’s like, ‘the grand finale’. [The principal] goes with them. They walk down. They spend the whole day talking about their time at Lansdowne. They have lunch somewhere [on the way down]. They get back to school about four or five o’clock, depending on how long [it takes]. That’s
sort of the final thing they do as a group. They’ll remember that for the rest of their lives – the time they walked from the top of Mt Wellington back to their primary school with their principal.

The capacity of the principal to view what may seem to be negative experiences as being highly positive learning situation was of particular importance to, and greatly appreciated by parents, as the following exchange illustrates.

- My daughter who’s in grade one had a terrible time with separation problems when she started at the beginning of this year - she was crying every morning and having to be pulled off me. Peter, who spends a lot of time in the Kindergarten and Prep classes, noticed this. She came home from assembly that week with a principal’s award for bravery. I couldn’t believe it! I said to her the following week, “You’re happy to go to school now, when I say goodbye you’re happy to be left?” She said, “Yes, that’s because I got a principal’s award for being brave, and I’m brave!” I just couldn’t believe how effective that was.

- Something that was a major problem in your life was resolved.

- Yes, totally, and to recognise it and put it into a positive framework. I was focussing on her fear and he gave her an award for being brave, which is the flip-side. I just find that positive energy helped me be a better parent of a school age child, and that is reassuring. I just think the kids are noticed and their individual needs responded to.

Another parent commented:

- We went into parent/teacher one afternoon thinking that one of our children was doing O.K. and were told a few home truths. We came out absolutely shattered. We saw [the principal] the next day in the corridor and he said, “How did you go with parent/teacher?” I said we were just so upset. He turned the whole thing around and put a positive spin on it. It was like a weight was lifted off me. I couldn’t wait to go home and tell my husband. Suddenly, it wasn’t this huge problem that our son had. He turned it and focussed on our son’s positive aspects – it was just that reassurance. Without this intervention everyone could have been suffering for ages. The children are getting a lot from the school and from parents being supported. We’re all really benefiting.

Parents were seen to be welcomed into the school and were encouraged to participate in classroom activities. The first day of the 2008 school year, for example, we noted large numbers of fathers, mothers, grandparents, and/or carers walking into the school grounds with children of all ages. Many of the adults were observed chatting, after delivering children to their classrooms, lending support for the notion that the school operated as one, large, extended family.

The principal extended an open invitation for parents to visit the school to discuss matters of concern to them and/or to join in the life of the school. During the meet-the-teacher and barbecue for parents, one grand parent described Pete, the principal, as

one out of the box! He is so supportive of students!

Pete had been able to follow up a concern of the grandparent and the grandson during a class excursion to an environment centre. He had taken the opportunity to talk with the boy and address his concerns whilst both were participating in the excursion.
Parents were observed to be willing supporters of and wanting to participate in school activities. Around 20 parents and teachers attended the first SCA meeting for 2008. The Council is an active supporter of the school. A recent Fair had raised in excess of $20,000 and the council was seeking input from the school in determining how student programs could be supported appropriately. This process began with the compilation of a wish list by parents and teachers, from which priority items for support would be chosen. A recent project of the Council had been to replace a tree house attached to an old oak tree with a free-standing structure that is greatly enjoyed by students of all ages (see photo).

The council reaffirmed its unqualified support for the school’s participation in the Sustainable Schools Initiative. This initiative is an emerging priority within the school and being a leader on the subject, hosted an inter-school seminar during April 2008. LCPS has a School Environment Management Plan for 2008. The plan includes a definition of sustainability, a vision statement, a set of objectives and a list of knowledge and understandings. The project highlights the fact that students live and work within a community and as such they share a responsibility with others as to what happens within that community. Some of the elements in the School Environment Management Plan follow:

- **Vision**
  - To foster a sense of wonderment and awe and positive attitudes towards our environment.
  - To create an awareness of the fact that the way we live impacts on the Earth’s finite resources (on which we depend).

- **Objectives**
  - To promote eco-literacy within the school community and build further links with the community.
  - To build the students’ understanding of why a healthy, sustainable environment is important.

- **Understandings**
  - When we work together we can make more of an impact.
  - Each one of us can make a positive difference to the environment.

As part of the redevelopment of the school buildings water tanks were installed beneath the new classrooms that will provide water for school toilets. A kitchen garden, was being constructed by parent volunteers. In the meantime class groups are using foam and ‘recycling’ boxes filled with soil until the larger terraced garden is completed (see photos).
Pete, the principal, has taken the unique step of appointing an appropriately qualified parent as the school’s ‘resident’ scientist for 2008. The ‘resident’ scientist, although not employed by the school, is a parent with qualifications in this area of science who has made himself available. The ‘resident’ scientist is on call to assist teachers and students undertake class projects, especially on the theme of sustainability.

As well as a very active and supportive parent community, LCPS has strong links to the broader educational and Tasmanian community. Conversations with the principal show that LCPS has established links with three neighbouring primary schools, one through discussions about student literacy, and the other two in a mentoring role. In addition, the principal and staff representatives participate in cluster school professional development meetings that have a focus on moderating and evaluating student performance in key curriculum areas, particularly literacy and numeracy. The school is a participant in the Sustainable Schools Initiative, an outcome being that Lansdowne students presented their studies on related issues to students in a neighbouring school. Students in the upper primary grades have regular contact with their peers in other schools through inter-school activities such different sports, debating, musical strings program and choirs, leadership conferences, and film-making. Students have participated in Science Week activities and a drama production with the local senior secondary college and have hosted Vocation, Education Training students in the school office and the physical education program.

As noted earlier, the principal is in regular contact with other principals through his participation on the Executive of the Tasmanian Principals Association and has recently become Vice President (Primary). He is also a member of the Department of Education’s School Improvement Board, as well as being a member of the board of the Learning and Information Network Centre (Huon) which provides community access to government services and the use of information technology systems. Pete’s deep involvement in the not for profit, training and employment organisation, STEPS, brings him into contact with many people from all walks of life, but particularly, those in need.

Two staff-members are on the Department of Education’s Information Technology/Media Standing Committee. Staff has also worked in conjunction with a neighbouring high school on a mentoring program for boys. The Faculty of Education at the University of Tasmania regularly sends its teacher education students to the school for their teaching practice sessions. The school has also hosted staff on a visit to Hobart from the Latrobe University (Melbourne). Staff have participated in inter-school professional development activities in the area of environmental sustainability, literacy, library related matters, the Early Years of schooling and transition from primary to secondary school. The school had been a host school for the Essential Learnings Curriculum that has now been replaced by the new Tasmania Curriculum.

In summary, parents like being appreciated by the principal and staff, and in turn, value the opportunities and experiences that the school gives their children. Parents are high in their praise of the quality relationships that have been nurtured between students, and among
teachers, parents, students and the principal. Parents appreciated the many leadership opportunities teachers give students and the manner in which classes are mixed for some activities enabling the development of caring and supportive relationships between older and younger students, exemplified by the mentoring of students through the peer support programs. Parents commented particularly on the caring and supportive role of the principal and his capacity to be actively involved in the life of the school. They were complimentary about his participation in class programs and excursions and appreciated that he had an intimate knowledge of the progress being made by their children. They particularly appreciated being on first name terms with the principal and that their concerns were taken seriously and followed up at the earliest opportunity. Open lines of communication were evident at all levels within the school community. The parent community was observed to actively support and promote the work of the school and expressed delight at the range of opportunities experienced by their children.

LCPS also has strong links beyond the school to the profession in bodies such as professional associations, DoE boards and professional development provisions and the university, and broader community bodies serving public purposes, such as environmental, cultural and sporting programs, training and employment for the less advantaged and services access in rural communities.

6.5 Conclusion: What we found at Lansdowne Crescent Primary School

At the end of the school priorities and principal and senior staff sections we summarised our tentative learnings about LCPS and their understanding and enactment of the public purposes of education. These learnings are summarised in the following Table along with the summary evidence from and/or about the teachers, students, and parents and wider community.

The first and most obvious observation about the summary Table is the wide congruence among role groups and data sources. In fact, such congruence could itself be seen as an important factor in successful public purposes of education enactment. Where there are added elements they arise from being specific to one or more roles, for example items about approaches to teaching and learning tend to be specific to the teachers.

LCPS clearly understands the public purposes of education to include democratic equality, which is about preparing all of its students to be active and competent citizens through respect and empowerment, a wide range of opportunities, social capital development, democratic processes, and valuing diversity and environmental sustainability. In terms of social capital, there is evidence at LCPS of all three forms, that is, within the school (bonding social capital), between the school and other schools (bridging social capital) and between the school and the community (linking social capital) (Mulford, 2007c). The school not only strongly believes that achieving such public purposes is crucial in being seen as an excellent educational institution in today’s and future societal contexts, but also contributes to the achievement of private purposes.

In terms of the enactment of the public purposes of education, LCPS has a strong focus on a community living and working together in a culture of continuous improvement. The community is seen as a means for achieving the school’s purposes but also as an end in itself (that is, a public purpose) involving collaboration, caring and supportive relationships, trust, honesty, all being valued, positive enthusiasm, ownership, and pride in achievements. The professionals are seen as enacting this and other purposes by having children as their first focus (that is, all children), having high expectations, believing they make a difference, working in collegial teams, being flexible but having clearly articulated leadership responsibilities, owning their professional development, and seeing parents and community members as partners. Holistic education is stressed employing multiple layering of purpose in
teaching and learning programs and wide use of mixed ability and age groupings. Enactment also involves learning, which is seen to derive from the provision of a rich environment and a wide range of opportunities, including for leadership and through strong links with the community, and a focus on continuous improvement.

LCPS recognises there are ongoing challenges. The 2006 SSPP research identified the school’s planned focus for the next five years as improved pedagogy in all classes to meet changing needs, an improved physical environment and children taking more ownership of their own learning. As also noted early in this case study, the principal constantly acknowledges that the school is imperfect – we can always be better!

### Summary of LCPS and the Public Purposes of Education

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Areas</th>
<th>Element</th>
<th>Data source</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>School profile, principal and senior staff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Understanding</strong></td>
<td>Characteristics:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>democratic processes, including involvement in decision making and respect and empowerment of all with responsibility</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>equity, including a wide range of opportunities for all in a wide range of areas</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>social capital, including social and community development (trust, care, respect, belonging, relationships, cooperation, etc)</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>valuing diversity</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>environmental sustainability</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Outcomes of:</strong></td>
<td>crucial for an excellent school</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>contributes to achievement of private purposes</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Enactment</strong></td>
<td>Culture:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>building a collegial community, which acts as a whole/extended family with high quality relationships and friendships</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>first and most important focus is children</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>flexibility, openness and willingness to listen</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>all (staff, students, parents) are positive, committed, highly motivated with a sense of ownership</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>opportunity to be part of a partnership involving ownership of everything that's happening e.g., parents welcomed into and participate in classrooms</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>high levels of support and encouragement from, and partnership with, leaders, staff, students and parents</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>culture of continuous improvement</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>sustaining change, especially that which value adds, in a slow and measured way</td>
<td>x</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Curriculum and Pedagogy:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>holistic education (not just academic)</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>high, achievable expectations with clarity of purpose (clear goals for learning) and celebration of success</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>multiple layering of purpose in teaching and learning programs</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>a very wide range of opportunities in terms of student programs (PE, music, magazine, camps, excursions, assemblies, etc)</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
emphasis on an environmentally sustainable school and community
widespread opportunities for student empowerment and leadership
flexibility, that is an ability to take advantage of what ‘lands on the doorstep’
use of evidence/data to support change, including careful tracking of pupil progress

**Structure:**
- leadership distributed to high quality, professional, empowered staff
- highly professional, supportive, transparent, accessible principal
- clearly articulated leadership roles
- wide use of mixed ability and age groupings, including peer support program
- links to broader educational community, including mentoring, professional development and system leadership as well as for accountability
- links to broader communities serving public purposes

**Helping factors**
- principal and senior staff who espouse, model and act on public purposes
- empowered professional staff providing a rich educational environment that focuses on all children
- sharing, collegiate teams of teachers involved in decision making and who have deprivatised their practice
- high quality communication
- targeted, owned, quality PD
- quality physical environment
- a state curriculum that gives priority to public purposes
- confidence and ability to take from system what the school can use and is consistent with already decided school direction
- students who support, respect and value each other
- supportive, engaged, partnered community

**Hindering factors**
- unsympathetic school leadership
- disempowered professional staff
- competitive staff with a lack of teamwork and privatisation of practice
- poor communication
- unsupportive community
- narrow state curriculum
- politicians and DoE that give priority to a narrow set of (private purpose) school outcomes
- children and parents without, and/or do not support the learning of, social skills

Etc … (reverse of helping factors)

It is clear that he considers it very important for staff to review progress and identify areas in which the school can improve its capacity to provide for all students in the school. Areas addressed in a whole staff professional development day conducted in October included clarifying roles required to take the school forward in 2009, developing teacher skills that would help them confidently multi-layer purposes in the delivery of classroom programs (particularly to ensure that the middle ability group of students in classes is catered for), improve the capacity of all Year 6 students to provide leadership across the school, improve the tracking of student progress in the senior grades, support children who “struggle to play” at recess and lunch times by providing a woodwork table for them to freely access, provide
from school resources additional teacher aide time for students at risk who don’t fit the Department of Education’s funding criteria, focus the use of community tutors on gifted and mentoring programs for students who need support.

In addition, the principal sees himself as having an ongoing and increasing role providing a “buffer” between teachers and the system as there is a strong perception among teachers that the Department of Education is engaged in “Change for change sake!” and that actions taken by the Department have a tendency to “undermine teachers”. This position is reinforced by the collective principal and staff stance that they only take from the system what after careful collective consideration the school can use and is consistent with the already thought through school direction. An example of this is the fact that the ELs curriculum with its strong emphasis on the public purposes of education continues to permeate the every day life of the school and its community. What is sad about this situation, however, is that the school believes it cannot publicly state what it is doing in terms of the ‘old’ ELs curriculum fearing the disapproval of the Minister of Education and the DoE who have moved on to the ‘new’ Tasmanian Curriculum.

We conclude that LCPS is a ‘best practice’ school, including in the priority given to, their understanding of, and the successful enactment of the public purposes of schooling. The priority given to public purposes is clearly reflected, for example, in the school’s motto and goals. A high level of understanding of and success in enacting and achieving the public purposes of schooling is reflected in statements of how goals are to be achieved, the way the school is organised, run and lead, as well as in the curriculum.

In respect of the goal achievement, what is absolutely clear here is that at LCPS the students are the major focus with the way the school is organised, run and led always being filtered through what is best for the students. Democratic equality dominates. Everyone (leaders, teachers, support staff, community members, and students) has the opportunity and is encouraged and facilitated to participate fully in the way the school is organised, run and led. There is a very strong climate of care and concern with the highest emphasis placed on quality relationships. Each group supports and is committed to the other groups.

LCPS understands the elements that most help or hinder achievement of the public purposes of education as being linked to the quality of leadership in the school (both in its role and distributed form), the level of empowerment (for students, staff and parents/community), the level of collegiality, including involvement in decision making and deprivatised teacher practice, system priorities that favour public purposes and allow choice to use only that which is consistent with the already decided school direction, and the level of support (from students, staff and parents/community). As we have seen throughout this case study, the role of the principal cannot be underestimated.

Finally, and in addition to the evidence we have detailed in this Chapter, the fact that the principal, senior teachers, teachers, and parents were so open and welcoming to our ‘prying eyes and ears’ only serves to reinforce our conclusion about LCPS being a best practice community of professional learners (see Chapter 2 and Mulford, 2007c) facilitating best practice in terms of the public purposes of education. It is rare indeed for a school and its community to open themselves to independent observers gathering in-depth data over an extended period of time.

13 Although the hindering forces are more implied as the opposite of the helping forces rather than being specifically mentioned in the case study.
6.6 References


7. Conclusion: Serving Public Purposes in Tasmanian Primary Schools?

7.1 Introduction: The importance of public purposes

As we argued in the introduction to this book, behind every new educational policy or strategy is an assumption about the contribution that it will make to the purposes of schooling. And yet these purposes are rarely the subject of extended public or professional debate. It is our view that at this point in Tasmania’s history there is a need to bring them back to centre stage.

Schools have always served a number of purposes. Some purposes can be described as primarily public in that they advance the interests of society as a whole; others are primarily private in that they promote the interests of individuals. In any democratic society educational institutions will always serve both public and private purposes: it is a matter of balance. In different historical times there have been shifts in the emphasis. The question of whether the right balance has been achieved at any point in time is an important, although also neglected, one in debates about public policy and practice. Current education policy and practice foregrounds the social efficiency and social mobility or private purposes of schools and backgrounds the democratic equality or public purposes.

We contend that the large number of expectations on schools (as illustrated on this book’s cover) and especially the current emphasis on the private rather than the public purposes of schools is unhealthy for Tasmania, not least because it runs the danger of producing self interested, competitive and culturally bound individuals who are more interested in their own self-advancement than they are in making a contribution to the common good. Our position was confirmed by the Tasmania primary principals in their responses to our national survey. Not only were private purposes and strategies such as “sorting and selecting students into categories that help determine their later life chances” and “mandate league tables based on test outcomes”, ranked lowest in importance but also their enactment was consistently seen to be higher than their importance.

As argued in detail in Chapter 2, which contained an overview of the forces impacting upon Australian schools, we live in a globalising world where the role of the nation-state is changing and societies are becoming increasingly culturally diverse, technologically advanced, demographically diverse, and environmentally sensitive. In this context schools are needed more than ever for the important public purpose of forming active citizens for democratic publics - people with the will and commitment to shape, and participate in, an inclusive and democratic civil society and polity that are responsive to the new environment. As the Secretary-General of OECD recently (10 October 2009) remarked at the Education Ministerial Round Table (Gurria, 2009):

... the more globalised and inter dependent the world becomes, the more we need great collaborators and orchestrators, not isolated individuals, no matter how well they do. We need to form people for a more inclusive world: people who can appreciate and build on different values, beliefs, cultures. Inter-personal competencies to produce inclusive solutions will be of growing importance.

Recent Australian education reports and Tasmanian and UK research support these arguments.
For example, the report on the future of schooling in Australia by the States and Territories (Federalist Paper 2, 2007) warns against narrowing the curriculum and reasserts the importance of the Adelaide Declaration (MCEETYA, 1999) goals with its commitment to a broad curriculum designed to foster the understandings, skills and dispositions needed for life in a globalising world. The more recent Ministerial Council for Education, Employment, and Training and Youth Affairs (2008) Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians confirms these public priorities. It gives strong emphasis to the underpinning values of schooling that include “honesty, resilience, empathy and respect for others”, acting “with moral and ethical integrity”, appreciation of “social, cultural, linguistic and religious diversity” and “commitment to national values of democracy, equity and justice”, communication “across cultures”, as well as working for “the common good”.

Our own Tasmanian research, which has been conducted over a 20 year period exploring the links between school leadership and student outcomes (see, for example: Mulford 2008; Mulford & Edmunds 2009; Mulford, Johns & Edmunds, 2009; Silins & Mulford, 2007), has found that even though student outcomes reflecting public purposes (specifically, concepts such as student self efficacy, social efficacy, self concept, engagement, participation) are vital both in and of themselves for students’ future life success (see below) and as the strongest predictor of student academic achievement. We (Mulford & Silins, 2009, p. 177) have been very clear that “the most direct route for a school to achieve academic success for their students is the indirect route through the fostering of student empowerment and social development”.

Three high quality longitudinal research studies from the UK, which use data from studies following British children into adulthood over a more than 40 year period (see Chapter 2 Section 2.3.2 of this book for more details on the Feinstein (2000), Carneiro et al (2006) and Margo et al, (2006) studies), clearly demonstrate that the development of social and cultural capabilities – and not just a narrow band of academic cognitive studies - are central to children’s future life opportunities. For example, Margo et al (2006) found that in just over a decade for those students from less affluent backgrounds personal and social skills have become 33 times more important in determining relative life chances in terms of employment and wage levels. UNICEF’s (2007) report on child well-being also demonstrates a strong relationship between 15 year-old student self and peer well-being and educational achievement in reading, mathematics and science literacies as well as remaining in education. We need to also remind ourselves that remediation of inadequate early investment in the public purposes of education is difficult and very costly (Cunha et al, 2005), especially for areas such as the state’s health and legal/penal systems.

This book sought to examine these crucial public purposes of schools in Tasmania. It explored how the public purposes were currently understood, the importance given to them and how they could be successfully enacted.

### 7.2 Understanding of and importance given to public purposes

Pleasingly, comparison of Tasmanian educational policy and policy maker’s views on the purposes of education and their enactment are similar in respect of promoting a strong emphasis on the public purposes, especially in areas such as equity and democratic citizenship. The policy documents go further than the policy makers by including related

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concepts such as social responsibility, justice and capital, shared and sustainable futures, wide participation (in terms of both groups and areas), and support for diversity and overcoming disadvantage.

However, what is striking is the number and rapidity of change in Tasmanian educational policy documents in recent years. There is sense that educational change is constantly necessary, easy to accomplish and can be successfully delivered through policy pronouncements that usually follow the appointment of a new Minister for Education and/or senior Department of Education officer. As the parents’ representative noted in a mixed metaphor in her interview “Schools think they’ve been in a really competitive surfing competition and they’ve been riding so many waves that are going up and down that they don’t really know where they are, … We need to settle down … and … not change the goal posts every time they go 50 metres”.

There is also mounting evidence that while there are many educational purposes, only a very limited number are actually given priority and support. For example, only a limited number of purposes are evaluated in any detail. Despite the policy documents and policy maker pronouncements of what is important, these evaluated, and therefore valued, areas continue to heavily favour the private purposes of education.

Some (such as the Minister for Education in his interview for this research) suggest that public purposes may be too hard to evaluate. In contrast, we believe education goals should be defined on their underlying importance, not by whether or not we can easily measure them – we should measure what we value not value what we think we can easily measure. The current situation in practice in Tasmania not only underestimates the net contribution that schools make but permits a very limited measure of school performance to monopolise the ‘allocation’ of students into the state’s social division of labour (Hogan & Donovan, 2005) and reflects a widespread policy/enactment incoherence that could be seen as a betrayal of the breadth of our historic Tasmanian commitments to our young (Rothstein & Jacobsen, 2006).

What did Tasmanian primary school principals have to say about the purposes of education and their enactment? It is clear from the principal survey that they rate both the importance and enactment of public purposes most highly and private purposes most lowly. Groupings of survey items on purposes such as “Love of learning and responsible citizens for democracy and the common good” and “Social justice” rated very highly while “Sorting for employment and the economy” rated very lowly. However, when compared with the results from the national sample, Tasmanian primary principals tended to score higher on importance and lower enactment, especially those purposes and strategies linked to public purposes. These results suggest a greater dissatisfaction exists amongst Tasmanian primary principals than Australia-wide.

The survey’s open ended responses reinforced the survey item findings. The very high response rate in this section of the survey, especially in relation to the barriers in achieving the public purposes of schools suggests the issues raised are deeply and widely felt by Tasmanian primary principals. Factors external to the school dominate. Inadequate resourcing and support and unsympathetic politicians and bureaucracies (such as the insistence on one size fits all approaches, including for curriculum and assessment through testing) are seen to contribute to an uneven playing field, especially in comparison with the private schooling sector, and difficulties in successfully catering for a diverse student population and facilitating a socially just, equitable, cohesive, and inclusive society.

In brief, our research suggests that while high priority is given to the public purposes of education in the Tasmania education system and its primary schools, successful enactment of these public purposes is another matter – the fine words do not translate into fine action.
7.3 Enacting public purposes

The policy maker’s interviews suggest that greater enactment of the public purposes of education would occur with more encouragement and support for community involvement in schools and greater devotion to and support for school and parent communities. It is felt that public purposes could be further facilitated by investing in leadership skills, especially for the large new cohort of empowered principals and a well educated, continually learning teaching force. However a number of forces are seen by policy makers to hinder the public purposes of education and their enactment, including an unsympathetic media, a conservative community, a number of competitive and cynical principals with poor networking skills, a teachers’ union that is industrial rather than professional, and from the parent’s body point of view a lack of government support in terms of resources, time to rebuild when changes occur and public statements.

What is clear from the survey of primary principals’ views about the strategies used to achieve the purposes of education is that Tasmanian primary principals rate the enactment of what we could term the ‘public strategies’ most highly and ‘private strategies’ most lowly. Groupings of survey items on strategies such as “Foster professional and student trust and collaboration”, “Value and resource difference and disadvantage” and “Community resource, development and involvement” rated very highly while “National ‘basics’ tests to sort students and schools” rated very lowly.

It makes sense to us that to achieve the best results in our schools the purposes and enactment strategies need to be consistent with each other, that is, that they are both ‘public’ in nature. But when compared with the results from the national sample, Tasmanian primary principals tended to score higher on importance and lower enactment for the strategies used to achieve the purposes, especially those strategies linked to public purposes. Again, we suggest that these results reflect a great deal of dissatisfaction amongst Tasmanian primary principals.

The greatest difference/dissatisfaction for Tasmanian primary principals related to strategies originating outside schools at the system level. These strategies included collaboration (“Ensure school involvement in developing education policy” and “Promote collaboration rather than competition amongst schools”), enrolment policies (“Ensure that all schools … have transparent enrolment policies” and “Give parents the right to choose a school for their children”), assessment (“Ensure that assessment and reporting approaches are used to support student learning” and not “to sort students” or “Mandate national testing programs”), and resourcing (“Fund schools on the basis of need”). There was also a great deal of dissatisfaction (the gap between importance and enactment) amongst Tasmanian Primary principals on the strategy “Community resource, development and involvement”.

The Tasmanian media is seen by policy makers and school principals as being unsympathetic to public education and the public purposes of education. An in depth case study of the articles reported in Hobart’s Mercury newspaper over a seven year period about the implementation of a major curriculum change (Essential Learnings or ELs) that included as a major focus the public purposes of education confirmed this perception. ELs started with a great deal of promise for the public purposes of education and with the intent to revitalise pedagogy in a way that had never before been attempted. The early years were exemplary in terms of ‘public strategies’ using a model of co-construction to great effect. Unfortunately, impatience on the part of the Department of Education and a return to mandated systems of control saw the ELs process quickly unravel.

Once problems surfaced in terms of ELs assessment and reporting, the ‘hyenas’, fanned by the media pounced, allowing the rather shaky commitment to the ELs by sections of the
bureaucracy, those who had not been part of the staged implementation process and certain
groups of teachers, such as some of those in secondary schools wedded to traditional subject
departments, to quickly erode. As Greg Barnes, a columnist with the *Mercury* (10 July 2006,
p.16) concluded, ELs should not have been “subjected to the whims of political sloganeering,
and those in the education movement who do not have the wherewithal to embrace the
reforms”.

The time needed to understand, assess and report on such a major change was not provided.
The Minister, Departmental heads, supporting officers and those in schools did not move as
one. In fact, impatience on the part of the Department hierarchy and their move to mandate
requirements at an inappropriate time was a major nail in ELs’ coffin. Continual top down
restructuring of the Department also led to insecurity among teachers. Other hindering forces
included the Federal Government’s much more conservative stance on educational matters,
such as traditional subjects and reporting, and the absence of informed commentary from the
profession, including the principals and their association.

Conservatism ruled and the status quo quickly filled the void. Whilst ELs offered promise and
the chance to revitalise the secondary sector of education in which so many children are
reported to be disaffected, the Tasmania curriculum quickly reverted to a subject based
curriculum, more traditional in its offerings, simplified to make it more acceptable for teachers,
parents and employers, and less ‘public’ in its orientation.

The media case study raised a number of questions, including:

- Would education be better served if public service limitations were lifted and
teachers and principals were encouraged to participate in a full and open debate
about the public purposes of education and the merits of the curriculum used – that
is, the process was as public as the purpose?
- How can student progress, especially on the public purposes of education, be
reported on in a way that is acceptable to the parents and employers?
- How much time is required in order to establish a sufficiently large critical mass so
that major changes such as ELs and its public purposes will continue?
- What is the public purpose of the media, or is such a question just plain fanciful?

In the interview with the Minister for Education he stated that “[What] I’ll be really interested
in … is [how we translate the] pretty lofty ideals of equity, prosperity and democracy [into
practice]. How do you translate that into how school operate, what they do on a daily basis?
… That’s really hard stuff.” A detailed, in-depth best practice case study of one such
Tasmanian primary school, Lansdowne Crescent Primary School (LCPS), allowed us to
answer the Minister question.

In this case study we found:

In respect of purposes -
- Wide congruence among role groups and data sources that the public purposes of
education include democratic equality, which is about preparing all of its students to be
active and competent citizens through respect and empowerment, a wide range of
opportunities, social capital development, democratic processes, and valuing diversity and
environmental sustainability.
- Evidence of valuing all three forms of social capital, that is, within the school (bonding
social capital), between the school and other schools (bridging social capital) and between
the school and the community (linking social capital).
• The school not only strongly believes that achieving such public purposes is crucial in being seen as an excellent educational institution in today’s and future societal contexts, but also contributes to the achievement of private purposes.

In respect of enactment -
• Priority given to public purposes in the school’s motto and goals.
• A strong focus on a community living and working together in a culture of continuous improvement. The community is seen as a means for achieving the school’s purposes but also as an end in itself (that is, a public purpose) involving collaboration, caring and supportive relationships, trust, honesty, all being valued, positive enthusiasm, ownership, and pride in achievements.
• The professionals are seen as enacting purposes by having children as their first focus (that is, all children), having high expectations, believing they make a difference, working in collegial teams, being flexible but having clearly articulated leadership responsibilities, owning their professional development, and seeing parents and community members as partners.
• Holistic education is stressed employing multiple layering of purpose in teaching and learning programs and wide use of mixed ability and age groupings.
• Enactment involves learning, which is seen to derive from the provision of a rich environment and a wide range of opportunities, including for leadership and through strong links with the community, and a focus on continuous improvement.
• Recognition there are ongoing challenges with staff reviewing progress and identify areas in which the school can improve it’s capacity to provide for all students in the school.
• Principal sees himself as having an ongoing and increasing role providing a “buffer” between teachers and the system as there is a strong perception among teachers that the Department of Education is engaged in “change for change sake” and that actions taken by the Department have a tendency to “undermine teachers”.
• The school only takes from the system what, after careful collective consideration, the school can use and is consistent with the already thought through school direction (an example of this is the fact that the ELs curriculum with its strong emphasis on the public purposes of education continues to permeate the every day life of the school and its community).

We concluded that LCPS was a ‘best practice’ school, including the priority given to, their understanding of, and the successful enactment of the public purposes of schooling. A high level of understanding of and success in enacting and achieving the public purposes of schooling was reflected in statements of how goals were to be achieved, the way the school was organised, run and lead, as well as in the curriculum.

In respect of the goal achievement, what is absolutely clear was that at LCPS the students were the major focus with the way the school was organised, run and led always being filtered through what was best for the students. Democratic equality dominated. Everyone (leaders, teachers, support staff, community members, and students) had the opportunity and was encouraged and facilitated to participate fully in the way the school was organised, run and led. There was a very strong climate of care and concern with the highest emphasis placed on quality relationships. Each group supported and was committed to the other groups.

LCPS understood the elements that most help or hinder achievement of the public purposes of education as being linked to the quality of leadership in the school (both in its role and distributed form), the level of empowerment (for students, staff and parents/community), the level of collegiality, including involvement in decision making and deprivatised teacher practice, system priorities that favour public purposes and allow choice to use only that which is consistent with the already decided school direction, and the level of support (from
students, staff and parents/community). In achieving its success, the role of the principal and the development of a community of professional learners cannot be underestimated.

### 7.4 Conclusion and recommendations

Given our research findings and the analysis in Chapter 2 on the forces impacting upon schools, there is now more than ever a need for those in the Tasmanian education system and its schools to choose between competing forces, broaden what counts as good schooling and change the way schools are organised and run.

In choosing between competing forces Tasmanian schools should be seeking greater continuity than constant change (that is, stability for change), greater independence than dependence, greater community than individualism, and greater heterogeneity than homogeneity. And, as we have argued above, in broadening what counts as good schooling much greater attention needs to be paid to the importance and enactment of public purposes. In other words, the load on the school ‘horse’ depicted on the cover of this book can be greatly eased, thus allowing its feet to touch the ground and be able to move forward, by removing and/or decreasing the size of the boxes it is carrying that represent primarily the private purposes of education.

We are not the only ones arguing for much greater attention to be paid to the importance and enactment of public purposes. In USA, Glass (2008, pp. 231-232) in his recent book *Fertilizers, pills and magnetic strips* argues that these three inventions of the 20th century are shaping public education.

> The rural to urban migration, the control of conception and the extension of life expectancy, and the spread of uncollateralized personal credit are among these powerful forces. Under-girding these forces are fundamental human needs and desires: the pursuit of material self-interest, monetary advantage, comfort and security.

Glass (2008, pp. 237-238) sees such forces and needs resulting in the demise of a sense of community and the sense of common purpose and interconnectedness that supports public institutions such as public schools.

> The more people there are who live in gated communities, the fewer there are who care about supporting a police force. The more families there are who drive two and three cars, the fewer families there are who care about public transportation. The more people there are who drink only Evian, the fewer people there are who care what comes out of other people’s faucets. The more parents there are who send their children to private or quasi-private schools, the fewer persons there are who care what goes on in poor schools.

Glass (2008, pp. 249-250) warns that this move to private from public could result in public schools increasingly becoming the province of the poor and minorities, particularly in metropolitan areas, and a dangerous separation of liberty and justice.

> Americans love freedom, and nothing rankles them as much as infringements on their liberties. We are limited in our ability to imagine ourselves in the place of other people or to care for their fate as much as our own; and yet justice demands it. When problems of fairness and equity arise, we are often at a loss for solutions. If liberty and justice are separated, neither is safe. If exercise of liberties denies liberty to others, it is unjust.

15 And, perhaps, more widely given the recent national research report (FYA, 2009) revealing a sharp rise in the rate of growth of youth disengagement from work and study in Australia.
In UK, the recent comprehensive and independent six-year Cambridge Primary Review (Alexander, 2009) into the condition and future of primary education found England’s primary schools under intense pressure, but in good heart and in general doing a good job. Primary schools represented, for many, stability and positive values in a world where much else is changing and uncertain.

However, the report found that for too long “the aims of primary education have been too confused or tokenistic; and, too often, aims set off grandly in one direction while the curriculum follows a much narrower path”. The report proposes a framework of 12 aims grounded in evidence on the imperatives of childhood, society and the wider world today. The re-emphasis in this framework on the public purposes of education and their enactment is very clear\(^\text{16}\) with the aims grouping around three areas: individual well-being with its engagement, empowerment and autonomy; self, others and the wider world with its encouraging respect and reciprocity, promoting interdependence and sustainability, empowering local, national and global citizenship, and celebrating culture and community; and, learning, knowing and doing with its exploring, knowing, understanding and making sense, fostering skills, exciting imagination, and enacting dialogue. The report argues that these aims should drive rather than follow curriculum, teaching, assessment, schools and policy.

The Cambridge Primary Review (Alexander, 2009) also concludes that we need to move forward from debating whether schools and teachers should be accountable (they should) and concentrate instead on how they are accountable. It argues that there is a need to redefine primary education standards as the quality of learning in all areas, not just some of them. We agree. Public purposes and their enactment need to be evaluated and reported.

Such evaluations should not be difficult. For example, the highly respected international research mentioned earlier trusted the teachers’ professional views of student social outcomes and the Secretary of the Tasmanian Department of Education has suggested a ‘portfolio of stories’:

> [W]hat are the accountabilities? … [C]learly you’re going to jump to the literacy and numeracy national benchmarks. …[B]ut if you don’t have a portfolio of stories, if you don’t have a narrative about … your public purposes and your public purpose achievements, … you’re not telling the whole story about your school. … [I]t’s a damned sight more than a set of numbers. … [Y]ou say to the kids and parents ‘We are really pleased that 80% of our kids got the literacy benchmark … [and] we’re pleased that this and/or that student … gave something back to this community’.

Finally, the Cambridge Primary Review (Alexander, 2009) also has much to say about strategies for effectively implementing these aims. We will return to these findings later in this chapter.

Our arguments lead to our first four recommendations\(^\text{17}\):

1. **There is a desirable shift towards an evidence-rich policy environment in education but it must be complemented with intensive, open discussion with all stakeholders about the different types of evidence and its meaning and use,**

\(^{16}\) As are the similarities with Tasmania’s now ‘defunct’ Essential Learnings Curriculum.

\(^{17}\) Our recommendations follow but build on those of the Country Chief Education Officers who meet at a recent OECD Education Policy Committee in Seoul, Korea (September 2-3, 2008) to focus on successful strategies for improving school outcomes.
especially on the relative weights given to the public and private purposes of education

2. Education goals should be defined on their underlying value, not by whether or not we think we can easily measure them

3. The importance given to the public purposes of schools by Tasmanian policy documents and policy makers needs to be matched in practice, that is, support for their enactment, including their evaluation and reporting

4. In order to achieve recommendations 1 to 3, there is a need to change the way the Tasmania school system and its schools are organised and run

The remaining sections of this chapter build on this fourth recommendation and will lead to a further five recommendations.

Linking our results with literature presented in Chapter 2, we believe we can provide clear advice on how to change the way the Tasmania school system and its schools are organised and run. In brief, there is a need to take much more seriously moving from the bureaucratic to organic, thin to deep democracy, mass to personalised, and hierarchical to networked and that this best achieved through focussing on schools as communities of professional learners.

Research arising from the ongoing eight-country International Successful School Principals’ Project research project (Day & Leithwood, 2007, p. 1), which includes Tasmanian data, strongly confirms our findings on serving public purposes in Tasmanian primary schools. Both sets of research see successful principals thinking of their organisations as organic, living systems, not bureaucratic machines. As Day and Leithwood (2007, p. 1) state:

One of the more remarkable results of our research was that even in the highly accountable policy contexts intended to deal with such uncertainty, successful principals assiduously avoided a command and control form of leadership. ... Our successful principals, on the whole, appeared to hold a deep, if tacit, conception of their organisations as organic, living systems, rather than as machines. ... If the organisation needed ‘oiling’, it was increased mutual trust, not more policy and regulation that was applied.

Despite the Minister for Education’s statements that he “genuinely want[s] to see … the learning services serving, having a culture of service, not a culture of directing” and “We’re not here to tell schools what to do, we’re here to serve schools and their needs”, our results support Furman and Shields’ (2003) position that there remains a need to move our schools from ‘thin’ conceptions of democracy, based on the values of classical liberalism and on its concern with the right of the individual to pursue his or her self-interest plus the resolution of conflict through ‘democratic’ majority voting, to a notion of ‘deep’ democracy. ‘Deep’ democracy involves respect for the worth and dignity of individuals and their cultural traditions, reverence for, and the proactive facilitation of, free and open inquiry and critique, recognition of interdependence in working for the common good, the responsibility of individuals to participate in free and open inquiry and the importance of collective choices and actions in the interest of the public or common good.

More recent Tasmania Department of Education (DoE) policy documents than those available when we wrote Chapter 3 of this book include “The Student at the Centre: Supporting Improving Schools – 2006-2007 Plan” and “School Improvement Framework 2009”. “Students at the Centre” outlined a plan to better link the full expertise and resources of the DoE with its schools and students. Its theme was “continuing improvement, influenced by practicing educators in our schools rather than by a ‘top-down’ or centralist approach.” It argued that the “best way to support and improve schools is through the organic, devolved structures found in networked organisations, rather than a traditional bureaucracy” and that “with a shared vision, accountabilities, and a network of support, we can trust our principals and staff to deliver school improvement.” Within schools it sought devolved leadership,
collaboration, data-informed management, and excellent working relationships, in short, schools should be “the very best adult learning workplaces”. Schools and colleges were divided into four geographically based regions each supported by a Learning Services Group. Guided by strategies in “Students at the Centre”, the DoE’s “School Improvement Framework 2009” represented “a working document” which sought “to develop a clearer understanding of how school principals and managers in supporting services can work together to improve outcomes for students.” The major focus in this second document was on schools, Learning Services and Departmental relationships and responsibilities with a particular emphasis being given to accountabilities.

However, it’s no good just talking about ‘deep’ democracy and writing it in policy documents, it needs to be practised in schools and the school system. It may be too early in the “Students at the Centre/School Improvement Framework” process, but there seems to be two different perceptions of what is actually happening in Tasmanian schools. On the one hand, the Secretary of the Department of Education believes Tasmania needs principals with “less cynicism … able to manage teams of people … [and] truly able to network”. He sees that it’s “very dark between where our good schools are and where our less good schools are. … [I]t is in fact embedding much of the public purpose in the way the school runs, … the being of the school – we’re a fair way from this in all of our schools”. Data reported in the DoE’s “School Improvement Framework 2009” supports the Secretary’s position:

System-wide organisational health results for both schools and non-school work units indicate that we need to improve our empathic (listening) leadership by enabling full debate and facilitating participative decision making, and where possible consensus, on important issues. (p. 8)

On the other hand, our survey results found Tasmanian primary principals perceive top-down, one-size-fits-all approaches still dominate. Mandated assessment and reporting are not seen to support student learning, collaboration among schools is not seen to be supported and schools are not seen to be involved in the development of education policy. Others (Furman & Shields, 2003, p. 10) have reflected on the same phenomenon at the student level:

students often perceive is that they are expected to conform to hierarchically imposed decisions about what they study and teach and when, what the outcomes of instruction should be, how to behave and talk, and even how they look … [In fact,] learning democracy may be one of the least experiential aspects of K–12 curricula.

A major debate which has been taking place in the United Kingdom about the future shape of public services picks up on the confused contextual situation for those in Tasmanian schools and school system. This debate is pitched into the chasm between the way public institutions work and how users experience them. For example, in the education sector it has been argued that efficiency measures based on new public management as reflected in (Leadbeater, 2004, pp. 81, 83 & 90):

targets, league tables and inspection regimes may have improved aspects of performance in public services. Yet the cost has been to make public services seem more machine-like, more like a production line producing standardised goods. [And, I would add, increasingly create dependence on the system.] … It is ... clear that the State cannot deliver collective solutions from on high. It is too cumbersome and distant. The State can only help create public goods – such as better education – by encouraging them to emerge from within society ... That is, to shift from a model in which the centre controls, initiates, plans, instructs and serves, to one in which the centre governs through promoting collaborative, critical and honest self-evaluation and self-improvement.
The results from the OECD’s (2009) recent Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS) agree with Leadbeater. Variables found to be statistically significantly (at the .05 level) and positively related to teacher self-efficacy and/or classroom disciplinary climate in Australia included professional development, teacher-student relations, public recognition from principal/colleagues, leadership that frames and communicates school goals and curricular development, and teachers’ working morale. Many of these variables relate to what we have called ‘public purpose enactment’.

No statistically significant findings were found in the TALIS study in Australia in respect of areas such as school evaluations (whether or not they are published), performance pay, use of student test scores, direct supervision of instruction, or accountable/bureaucratic management. Many of these variables relate to ‘private purpose enactment’.

Some (Leadbeater, 2004) argue that public services can be improved by focusing on what is called ‘personalisation through participation’. Personalised public service is seen as having four different and increasingly participatory or ‘public’ meanings:

- providing people with a more customer-friendly interface with existing services;
- giving users more say in navigating their way through services once they have access to them;
- giving users more direct say over how the money is spent; and,
- seeing users not just as consumers but co-designers and co-producers of a service.

Across these four meanings, dependent users become consumers and commissioners then co-designers, co-producers and solution assemblers. In schools, learners (students and staff) would become actively and continually engaged in setting their own targets, devising their own learning plan and goals, and choosing from among a range of different ways to learn. Additionally, across the four meanings, the professional’s role changes from providing solutions for dependent users to designing environments, networks and platforms through which people can together devise their own independent and interdependent solutions.

If our principal survey results are anything to go by, Tasmania has a long way to go with such an inclusive, participative, public approach to education. For example, while the importance of student and community involvement in negotiating the curriculum and participating in its delivery rated between 3.10 and 3.60 on a five point scale (with 1.00 being ‘very low’ and 5.00 ‘very high’) the enactment scores fell to be within a range of 2.30 to 2.90, scores which were even lower than the results from the national survey.

Leadbeater (2005) also points out that personalised learning will only become reality when schools become much more networked but that collaboration needed for effective networks can be held back by regulation, inspection and system funding regimes. In support, Hopkins (NCSL, 2005, p. 7) argues that:

> traditional levers for improvement, such as tests and targets, are reaching the limits of their potential and the next phase of education reform will require new ways of

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18 This survey is the first attempt to provide an internationally comparative perspective on the conditions of teaching and learning. The focus in the initial round (late 2007/early 2008) was on lower secondary education in both the public and private sectors in 23 countries, including Australia (200 schools per country and 20 teachers and principal in each school - in Australia 2,275 teachers in 149 schools.). It examined teacher professional development, beliefs and practices, and appraisal and feedback as well as school leadership. Complimentary themes such as school climate, division of working time, job satisfaction and school autonomy and resources were included as well as data on a range of demographic variables, such as SES and teacher qualifications and experience. Estimates, or associations, were sought between these themes and teachers’ responses to questionnaire items regarding both classroom disciplinary climate and teacher self-efficacy. These two areas were chosen because they were considered from previous research to be important pre-conditions for teacher and student success. Australian teachers scored the equal fourth highest country on teacher self efficacy but close to the average on classroom disciplinary climate.
delivering excellence and equity [and that] networks [among schools] are perhaps the best way we have at present to create and support this expectation.

The Secretary of the Department of Education seems to agree when he noted in our interview with him that “Everything you see in good communities today … is about networking and partnerships”. But we need to be clear that networks cannot be controlled by a formal system, such as the Department of Education19 (Kanter, 1994; Rusch, 2005). Structures are malleable in networks but fixed and hierarchical systems; conflict is open and valued in networks while it tends to be hidden and feared in systems; communication is open and unbounded in networks but controlled and closed in systems; and, leadership is fluid in networks while it is hierarchical and assigned in systems. Perhaps these differences help explain why in Tasmania bridging social capital, or collaboration among schools, is not seen by primary school principals to be supported at the system level.

Unfortunately, and probably as a consequence of a fear of the risk of chaos and loss of political and bureaucratic control from the forces on schools, the typical response is the opposite of what is required, that is maintenance of the bureaucratic, thin democracy, mass, and hierarchical. Donaldson (2001, p. 11), for example, describes some major attributes of schools that contribute to what he calls a “leadership-resistant architecture” reflected in a “conspiracy of business.” There is, according to Donaldson, little time for the school leader to convene people to plan, organize, and follow through. Contact and the transaction of business often take place ‘catch-as-catch-can’. Opinion setting and relationship building in schools he argues are mostly inaccessible and even resistant to the principal’s formal attempt to guide and structure the direction of the school.

Elsewhere (Mulford, 2000) we have discussed what could be summarised as ‘transactional’ leadership within schools and between schools and the school system as too readily having the potential for ‘facades of orderly purposefulness’, ‘doing things right rather than doing the right thing’, ‘building in canvas’, or ‘procedural illusions of effectiveness’. Sizer (1984) has talked about 'Horace's Compromise', that is working toward a facade of orderly purposefulness, exchanging minimums in pursuit of the least hassle for everyone. Sometimes this compromise can be likened to 'doing things right' rather than 'doing the right thing'. As Sergiovanni (2000) noted, it has the same purpose as the latest military technology of 'building in canvas', that is, folding canvas tanks and canvas missile launchers designed to serve as decoys and to create an illusion of strength. Thus the purpose for education is to provide the right public face thus gaining the freedom for the government to interpret, decide, and function in ways that make short-term political but not necessarily long-term educational sense.

Meyer and Rowan (1987) point out that procedural illusions can be employed to maintain the myth of education and function to legitimise it to the outside world. In the absence of clear-cut output measures we turn to processes as outputs. For example, there are precise rules to classify (and credential) types of head teachers, types of teachers, types of students, and sets of topics. All these rules and regulations, competency lists, strategic plans, tests, examinations, and so on give confidence to the outside (and to many of those inside) that the education system and its schools know what they are doing.

The structure of the system or school is the functioning myth of the organisation that operates not necessarily to regulate intra-organisational activity, but to explain it, account for it, and to legitimate it to the members outside the organisation and to the wider society. The transactions in educational organisations are concerned with legitimacy. Structures are offered that are congruent with the social expectations and understandings about what education should be doing, e.g. process goals explicitly stated by an education department to

19 Or, at the school level, by the principal and/or senior management team.
help maintain or develop this legitimacy may influence the use of certain ‘approved’ consultants, the creation of organisational sub-units such as an audit section or office of review, the setting up of national examination boards and training institutions, and so on. While such actions may have little proven positive effect on what goes on in schools, classroom or with pupils, they do, at the time of their creation, demonstrate congruence with the goals and expectations of the wider society as perceived by the department or authority.

Here we are talking about high visibility and the impression of decisiveness of action. Such goal displacement does, of course, raise important moral questions, especially if you believe, as we do, that deception has no place in educational purposes or their enactment.

We see such goal displacement reported in the recent comprehensive and independent six-year Cambridge Primary Review (Alexander, 2009) into the condition and future of primary education in England. For example, among its findings the review noted the following, findings which were similar to our own:

- the questionable evidence on which some key educational policies have been based;
- the disenfranchising of local voice;
- the rise of unelected and unaccountable groups taking key decisions behind closed doors;
- the ‘empty rituals’ of consultation;
- the loss of professional dialogue and the politicisation of the entire educational enterprise so that it becomes impossible to debate ideas or evidence which are not ‘on message’, or were ‘not invented here’ (‘here’ being the Department of Education or the Minister of Education’s office);
- the authoritarian mindset including the use of myth and derision to underwrite exaggerated accounts of progress and discredit alternative views, including sacrificing the past to political point-scoring;
- the key role of the media in shaping information flowing to and from government.

The review (Alexander, 2009) found that attempts to control professional action and thought were not good for schools nor for democracy. For example, in contrast to the pre-1988 era, when government intervention in classroom life was minimal, in more recent times policies are imposed on teachers at a rate which has made their assimilation and implementation nearly impossible. In the eight years between 1996 and 2004 it was found that on average there was one report on literacy teaching every week!

Among its 75 recommendation, the review (Alexander, 2009) calls, as we do, for:

- top-down control and edict to be replaced by professional empowerment, mutual accountability and proper respect for research and experience;
- the quality of schooling to be judged in relation to all it does, not just its test scores;
- principals be given time and support to do what is their most important job – leading learning;

These concepts (conspiracy of business, transactional leadership, facades of orderly purposefulness, doing things right rather than doing the right thing, building in canvas, procedural illusions of effectiveness) may help explain the differences that continue between the centre and its principals in Tasmania and has resulted in the balances among trust/empowerment, support and accountability not being fully understood and/or accepted.

From our own research we believe one way to conceptualise successful ‘public’ enactments of the purposes of education, especially public purposes, (that is, a focus on the organic, deep democracy, personalised and networked) is to start with seeing, supporting and making schools accountable as communities of professional learners (see Chapter 2 and Mulford, 2007) and backward map to the most appropriate model for the centre, not start with what is
fundamentally a contradiction in terms, that is, yet another top-down model of devolution from the centre to schools. Research has shown that greater success, especially in continually improving student outcomes in the broad range of areas needed to succeed in modern society, comes in schools with strong bonding social capital, that is, with a strong community of professional learners. For example, the OECD’s (2009, p. 3) TALIS study argues that:

[Given] … the task in many countries is to transform traditional models of schooling, which have been effective at distinguishing those who are more academically talented from those who are less so, into customised learning systems that identify and develop the talents of all students, [it] will require the creation of ’knowledge rich’, evidence-based education systems, in which school leaders and teachers act as a professional community with authority to act, the necessary information to do so wisely, and access to effective support systems to assist them in implementing change.

Lansdowne Crescent Primary School provides an excellent Tasmanian example of a community of professional learners.

These arguments lead to our fifth and sixth recommendations as follows:

5. All players in educational improvement in Tasmania need to develop more realistic expectations about the pace and nature of reforms. Improvement in outcomes takes longer than an election cycle and accumulating evidence of success requires even more time

6. While there are no simple plans to reform complex educational systems, changing the way the Tasmania school system and its schools are organised and run should start by focussing, supporting and making accountable schools as communities of professional learners

There are three sequential elements in a community of professional learners, and the sequence is important. The first element in the sequence relates to a sense of community, how people are communicated with and treated. Success is more likely where people act rather than are always reacting, are empowered, involved in decision making through a transparent, facilitative and supportive structure, and are trusted, respected, encouraged and valued. It is a waste of time moving to the second element until such a community is established.

The second element concerns a community of professionals. A community of professionals involves shared norms, values and goals, including valuing differences and diversity, a focus on implementation and continuous enhancement of quality learning for all students, deprivatisation of practice, collaboration, and critical reflective dialogue, especially that based on performance data. It is a waste of time moving to the third element until such a community of professional is established. One needs to have stability, to know what one stands for, to have an identity, before one ventures into too much change and innovation.

But a community of professionals can be static, continuing to do the same or similar thing well. The final element relates to the presence of a capacity for change, learning and risk taking and innovation, in other words, a community of professional learners.

Each element of a community of professional learners, and each transition between them, can be facilitated by appropriate leadership and ongoing, optimistic, caring, nurturing professional development programs.

This emphasis on communities of professional learners is consistent with our previous research on successful school principalship in Tasmania (Mulford & Edmunds, 2009; Mulford, Johns and Edmunds, 2009). In this research a principal’s influence on student outcomes was found to be indirect and mediated through teachers’ work. Principals, who lead schools in which the students succeed, work collaboratively with their teachers and involve
them in identifying directions, planning strategies and developing systems and structures that promote teaching and learning, and therefore student achievement. As our best-practice case study concluded, the role of the principal cannot be underestimated.

Termed ‘school capacity building’, this collaborative work was also defined using three sequential dimensions (see Appendix 4). Each dimension provided information that helps to identify specific approaches and strategies that in order promote school capacity building. The dimensions are very similar, in turn, to our earlier research in Tasmanian and South Australian secondary schools on school ‘organisational learning’ (see Chapter 2 Section 2.4.1 and Mulford & Silins, in press) and is supported in the recent longitudinal research of Heck and Hallinger (in press) in USA and Day et al (2009) in UK.

- Firstly, a trusting climate and empowerment refers to the need for the principal to look for ways to make the decision making processes of the school transparent and inclusive, facilitating involvement of interested staff and demonstrating valuing of and caring for staff by distributing leadership (in brief, trust and empowerment).
- Secondly, and using the established trust and empowerment, a shared school vision requires the principal to set aside time to identify with teachers and school community the school’s goals, develop and articulate a vision to guide the school, then, periodically re-affirm, review and monitor the school’s practices and progress against school goals and vision (in brief, shared and monitored mission and practice).
- Thirdly, and using the trust and empowerment and shared and monitored mission and practice, principals need to ensure school structures that support experimentation and initiative and to reinforce their value by providing a forum for open professional exchange where mistakes as well as successes promote learning. Such learning must be supported by relevant, accessible and ongoing professional development (in brief, supported, collaborative experimentation).

Previous unpublished material (see Appendix 4 and the following two graphs20) from our Successful School Principalship in Tasmania research (Mulford & Edmunds, 2009; Mulford, Johns & Edmunds, 2009) demonstrates that principals in schools with the highest as compared with those in the lowest student social success taking into account school socio-economic status (SES)21 scored statistically significantly higher on their perceptions of their contributions to school capacity building (including high expectations for and empowerment of students). Further analysis of this data indicated that there were large differences between teachers and principals perceptions of the principals’ contribution to school capacity building in schools with the lowest student social success (taking SES into account) with teachers always scoring much lower than the principals. In the highest student social success schools (taking SES into account) the teacher and principal perceptions of the principals’ contribution to school capacity building were very high and similar.

In respect of the comparison of the highest and lowest scoring schools on student literacy and numeracy (taking SES into account) on the principals’ contribution to school capacity building (including high expectations for and empowerment of students), none of the teacher responses were statistically significantly different but 13 of the 28 items (mainly in the ‘Shared and monitored mission and practice’ factor) of the principal responses were statistically significantly higher for those in the highest scoring schools. Further analysis of this data indicated differences between teacher and principal perceptions of principal contribution to school capacity building in both the highest and lowest literacy and numeracy

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20 In the graphs ‘T Low’ and ‘P Low’ = Teachers and Principals in the lowest success (student social and literacy/numeracy, taking SES into account) schools, and ‘T Hi gh’ and ‘P Hi gh’ = Teachers and Principals in the highest success schools. Only representative school capacity building items are show. For the full list of items see Appendix 4.
21 See Chapter 6 Section 6.1.3 and Charts 1 and 2 for an explanation of how this was done.
success schools (taking SES into account) with principals consistently scoring higher than the teachers. However this difference was much larger in the highest literacy and numeracy success schools.

These results along with the findings from our case study of a best-practice school lead us to conclude that the principal’s contribution to, and the congruence between teacher and principal perceptions of, school capacity building (including high expectations for and empowerment of students) are crucial for student social success. The situation is less definitive in respect to literacy and numeracy success. It may be that teachers see such areas as ‘their domain’ and do not see the principal directly involved with children in terms of their
literacy and numeracy. This result should not concern us because of our earlier research finding (Mulford & Silins, 2009, p. 177) that “the most direct route for a school to achieve academic success for their students is the indirect route through the fostering of student empowerment and social development” and the fact that, as we have just shown, such empowerment and social success is closely related to the principal’s contribution to, and the congruence between teacher and principal perceptions of, school capacity building.

Using this developmental conceptualisation of communities of professional learners (and school capacity building) can assist in better translating the forces impacting upon Tasmanian schools into how to change the way the schools are organised and run. For example, it can help us:

- understand better and be able to take action on the intricacies involved in moving a school, or part of a school, from where it is now to becoming truly a place of ongoing excellence and equity serving individual and public purposes without those in schools being ‘bowled over’ by the forces and pressures for change that surround them, including those from the system level;

- target appropriate interventions to ensure more effective progression through the stages. In targeting interventions recognition will need to be given to the fact that it is a journey and that actions at one stage may be inappropriate, or even counterproductive, at another stage; and,

- support the position that a school will need to be evaluated differently depending on the stage it has reached.

A major problem in Tasmania is that despite the priority given to school leadership by policy makers, such as the Minister of Education, for example

> *I see school principals as the embodiment of a school community … . [W]e need to distribute power to them, empower them to represent their school communities’ aspirations better. ... You need to change the culture to be one of empowering principals genuinely to make decisions about the resources available to the system as a whole and directing that resource ... strategically in the system as a whole. ... We need to invest more in leadership skills, [especially] the large next cohort coming through.*

and Secretary of the Department of Education, for example

> “Now is the time to be focussing on [leadership] because ... retirement rates [we can] do something about [the current conservatism]. If we wait too long then the kind of people who are going to end up in the position are going to be in the same mould. ... Our challenge as a system is how to support ... the work that principals do. ... [I]f you actually trust people, give them the resources and capacity, they do things that far exceed anything you could ‘manage’ them to do.”

this support has not as yet been translated into effective practice.

This situation may arise from a number of sources. First, a degree of cynicism about the ability and/or willingness of numbers of existing school principals to act in a professional manner (see, for example, the Secretary’s comments about “competitive and cynical” principals with “poor relationship and networking skills”). Second, and in the case study of the *Mercury* newspaper’s reporting of ELs, none of the bodies representing educators seemed to have the fortitude to ignore the archaic gag on public servants speaking publicly, even when this may have been in the best interests of the children in the state. The principals’
association responses were particularly noticeable by their absence. Finally, the Tasmanian primary principal survey responses laid most of the blame for less than satisfactory enactment of the highly desirable public purposes of education at the feet of external forces (that is, external to them). Yet, as the case study of Lansdowne Crescent Primary School has demonstrated, these public purposes can be successfully achieved despite ‘external’ conditions.

Little seems to have changed in Tasmania. Thirty four years ago, Pusey (1976) undertook an enquiry into the internal dynamics of the Tasmanian Department of Education’s secondary school system. With a background of six years in the Tasmanian system, first as a teacher and then as a member of the Department’s Curriculum Research and In-Service Education Branches, he attempted to explain “the tendency of bureaucratic organisations to become rigid, formalistic, and to some degree incapable of achieving their own goals” (p. ix). His analysis led him to conclude:

> Little of value can be achieved where the process of regeneration is mistakenly conceived within the term of the traditional model as the extension of the formal structure or as the refinement of the technology (for instance new curriculum prescriptions ...) .... Renewal ... depends much more essentially on the socially interactive dimension of the system’s operation. ... The process of regeneration, its spirit, and the more tangible innovations which may issue from it are the expressions of unique groups in particular (social) settings. (p. 122)

Pusey (1976, pp. 124-125) added that it is the principals who suffered most “from the disabling patterns of a whole system” and since “there is no strong supportive community within the school, the need for security can only be met in a negative way by over-dependence on the structure and its routines.” He argued that “principals of the future will have to rely less on formal structures and more on knowledge and genuinely professional leadership” (p. 125).

Pusey provided many examples of factors militating against “genuinely professional leadership”, but none more stark than the regulation on public statements by officers and employees. This regulation, which has remained on the books in an amended form (State Service Regulation, 2001) since the publication of Pusey’s work, states in part that:

> 11. An officer or employee is not, without the permission of the Minister administering the Agency in which the officer or employee is employed, to make any communication or contribution, directly or indirectly, anonymously or otherwise, on any matter affecting the Agency in which the officer or employee is employed, or the functions or duties of the officer or employee, to any newspaper or publication of a like nature ...

As Pusey (1976, p. 143, pointed out, the regulation is unconscionable:

> It is an indignity and it is plainly unenforceable since it is broken, technically, every time a principal makes a public address at a school speech night. ... [T]he needed benefits of open public debate will not materialise until teachers and administrators are convinced that their right to make constructive criticism, sometimes strongly, is both fully accepted and even valued.

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22 Situations such as this may arise because of the difficult situation the Tasmania Principals Association places itself in by continuing to be funded by and therefore being ‘part of’ the Tasmanian Department of Education. Until it has the fortitude to break this nexus it will struggle to be a truly independent and therefore professional body.
Our earlier results suggest that it also takes time as a principal to wean oneself from what are perceived as system demands and be able to stand on one’s own two professional feet. It may be that support for and enactment of the public purposes of education are more likely with experience both as a principal and in one’s school. A finding in need of further research was that related to schools with longer serving principals having higher levels of student empowerment. It may also be that a principal also needs time to feel comfortable in a school before genuinely empowering all others that school. These will be major issues given the older age profile of the Tasmanian principalship and the large proportion who will be retiring in the near future.²³ It also has implications for ‘undesirable’ schools, such as those in highly disadvantaged communities and/or small isolated rural communities, where there is continuous change in the principalship.

Our recent research on successful school principalship in Tasmania also strongly reinforced the need to go beyond principal to teacher responses in gathering data on principal and school success. This conclusion was based on the combination of our findings related to principals’ higher scores than teachers on the importance of and degree of improvement in student literacy and numeracy, some principals’ overestimation of their school’s literacy and numeracy success (even taking student background into account) when compared with actual test results and the significance of teacher, but not principal, perceptions of the school operation as well as teacher values and beliefs for a range student outcomes.

Despite these reservations about some principal’s motivations, competence and professionalism, Tasmania remains the only state or territory in Australia without a well thought through, sustained and supported school leadership professional learning program. This situation needs to be rectified urgently. As the OECD (2009, p. 204), among others, has pointed out “… an effective principal is likely to display elements of [different leadership] styles … [and] simply devolving responsibilities to schools does not necessarily trigger a change in leadership style”. They conclude that this situation “points to the need for active interventions to develop the skills and practices of individual principals” and that it “should not be assumed that structural changes in national [or state] administrative systems will automatically result in a desired form of leadership.”

Support for this position can be found in the most recent, largest and most extensive study of contemporary leadership to be conducted in England to date. In this longitudinal study, which started with a sample of 2,690 schools, Day, et al (2009) focused on schools that had significantly raised pupil attainment (Key Stage national assessment tests and GCSE results) over a three year period. Our school and principal rather than system focus is consistent with their conclusion (Day et al, 2009, p. 195) that in meeting the challenges facing education, mainly as a result of large-scale, extensive and changing policy reform over recent years

most success has been achieved as a result of the quality of leadership at the school level, rather than the direct influence of policy. ... [In brief,] the image that we see emerging from this research on successful schools is of individual leaders working to transform a system that for some time has been based on prescription to one where ‘professionalism’ provides the basis of a new approach.

Given the challenges we have identified, the professionalism required to meet them and the large proportion of principals retiring in the near future, these arguments also have major implications for the criteria used to select school principals in Tasmanian government schools.

²³ Our research sample and recent Tasmanian Department of Education figures confirm that in excess of 60% of Tasmanian principals are aged 50 or over and 25% are aged 55 or over.
This leads to our seventh recommendation:

7. **Tasmania needs sustained investment in change management in the profession, especially in school leadership**

Except for the most experienced principals, we have found a large difference between importance and enactment in the Tasmanian primary principal views about linking social capital, that is, involving the community (as a resource and/or to actively seek to develop). This finding is worrying given the results of one of our earlier research projects (Kilpatrick et al., 2001), which examined the extent and nature of the contribution of rural schools to their communities’ development beyond offering traditional forms of education to its young people. Rural school community partnerships were found to deliver a variety of positive outcomes for youth and for the community, including the provision of training that met both student and community needs, an improved school and community retention, plus positive environmental, cultural, recreational and economic outcomes. While these tangible outcomes are important to the sustainability of many small rural communities, the potentially more valuable outcome from the partnerships was the increase in individual and community capacity to influence their own futures. As the Minister rightly stated in his interview with us, “The less engaged the community is in their democracy the less effective it is”.

Throughout this book, we have made this same argument in respect of involving all those in schools. As our case study of a best-practice school clearly demonstrated, involvement must also include the students. To repeat what we said earlier in this chapter, student outcomes reflecting public purposes, specifically student empowerment and social development, are vital both in and of themselves for students’ future life success and as the strongest predictor of student academic achievement. It is in this area that we believe Tasmanian primary schools can most directly serve the investment made in the state’s schooling and at the same time most clearly serve public purposes.

The recent comprehensive and independent six-year Cambridge Primary Review (Alexander, 2009) into the condition and future of primary education in England again supports our arguments. This review found that the UK government has paid little attention to the cultural and communal significance of primary schools and their pupils and that this was a grave omission. Schools need to be seen as not only being communities but also as being in communities with considerable communal potential. The review also found that children were their most upbeat contributors and that there was a growing respect in schools for children as agents, valuable people and citizens in their own right. It also found, as we did, that children that feel empowered are more likely to be better and happier learners.

This leads to our eighth and ninth recommendations:

8. **Tasmanian school leaders and their schools need to give, and be supported for giving, high priority to developing the social capital of their local community**

9. **Tasmanian school leaders and their schools need to give, and be supported for giving, high priority to student empowerment and social development**
7.5 References


Appendix 1

Public Purposes of Schooling: an ARC project involving a partnership between the Universities of South Australia, Tasmania, Melbourne and Queensland, the Australian Government Primary Principals Association (AGPPA) and the Education Foundation (2007 – 2009).

The task of this ARC research project, which is broken into three parts.

**Part 1: How are the public purposes of (primary) schooling understood and represented in official discourses and in the public sphere? (2007)**

In 2007, after conducting a comprehensive philosophical, political, sociological, and educational literature review, the research team explored the ways in which the public purposes of schooling are understood and represented in policy and the media in the public sphere. This was achieved through an analysis of

- the education *policy texts* of political parties, trade unions, business associations and professional groups and interviews with 12 key *education policy makers* (e.g., Education Ministers, CEOs, Presidents of Associations); and
- The ways in which the *media* understand and represent the purposes of schooling. We used four case studies to explore this question: (1) a case study of the reporting of the Essential Learnings controversy in Tasmania; (2) a year of reporting on the national curriculum in the *Australian*; (3) a year of education reporting in Queensland’s *Courier Mail*; and (4) a historical study of the VCE controversy in Victoria in the late 1980s.

**Part 2: How are the public purposes of schooling understood and enacted in Australian primary schools? (2008)**

In the first half of 2008 we are conducting four in-depth case studies based in four primary schools identified by local AGPPA affiliates – one each in Queensland, Tasmania, South Australia and Victoria. The purpose of the case studies is to examine the ways in which the public purposes of education are understood and enacted in each of the schools. Data is being collected for the case studies from:

- in-depth interviews with the principal of the schools, parents, and teachers;
- focus groups of teachers;
- analysis of school documents, policies, newsletters, magazines and so on;
- observation of staff and parent meetings; and,
- observation of school artifacts, including student work.

The theorizing from this data is being informed by the literature review, media analysis, policy document analysis and interviews with policy makers that were conducted in 2007. It will also be tested through further work in a small number of additional primary schools which will be selected to ensure a balance of demographic, socio-economic and locational characteristics.

In the second half of 2008 we will use the data from the case studies and all the other analyses to develop, administer and analyse a questionnaire which will be sent to every Primary school principal in Australia. Again we will want to find out the extent to which principals understand and prioritise the public purposes as well as how they see these public purposes being enacted in their schools. A high response rate from principals will be crucial to the
success of this survey stage of our research as well as for the problem-based professional learning materials (see Part 3 below).

**Part 3: Outcomes (2009)**

In 2009 we will develop and write up the products from the project. This will include:

- a report to AGPPA and the Education Foundation on what we discovered and what we think might be the policy implications for state and federal governments and for the Associations;

- a suite of problem-based professional learning materials for use by primary schools and their leaders that can be used to encourage an exploration of the public purposes of education and their enactment;

- a book and a number of refereed and professional journal articles.

_Emeritus Professor Alan Reid (University of South Australia), Associate Professor Neil Cranston (University of Queensland), Professor Jack Keating (University of Melbourne), and Professor Emeritus Bill Mulford (University of Tasmania)_
Appendix 2

Interview Schedule

*Educational Investment in Australian Schooling: Serving Public Purposes*

### Interview Topics

**Name:** ____________________________________  **Date:** ________________________

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TOPIC</th>
<th>ISSUE TO CONSIDER</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 1. Changing “context” within which education/schools are now operating | • related to social, political, economic, other dynamics/forces  
• note the major ones  
• now, for the future? |
| 2. Impact of this changing “context” on schools – what mean for education/schools | • on education, schools generally  
• how have/are education/schools responded/ing?  
• specifically, how have these changes impacted on the purposes of schools?  
• any major changes in these purposes as a result |
| 3. Key/priority purposes of schooling today/future | • public purposes – public good – understanding of these notions?  
• private purposes – individual, private good  
• tensions, inconsistencies between these  
• decisions (by whom, how) what purposes of schooling ought be |
| 4. Enactment of public purposes | • at a policy level – how represented in policy – evidence  
• at a school level – what schools actually doing about these purposes – expectations, realities – evidence  
• consider all schooling sectors – state, non-state |
| 5. Achievement of these purposes in schools | • barriers to achievement at school level  
• facilitators at school level  
• tensions for schools in achieving these |
| 6. Evidence that public purpose are being enacted | • demonstration that public purposes are being enacted  
• across all schooling sectors/across all schools  
• outcomes of achievement of public purposes – school level, broader community level  
• who holds responsibility for achievement of public purposes – accountabilities? |
| 7. Lack of fulfilment of public purposes | • likely characteristics/ outcomes evident at school level  
• broader characteristics/outcomes beyond school level |
| 8. Any other issues re purposes of schooling, public purposes in particular |  |

*Public purposes notions could include ≈ democracy, citizenship, diversity, inclusivity, equity, social justice, community, access & equality, empowerment, cultural awareness, participation, collaboration, consultation, engagement, resilience, non-discrimination, sustainability, trust, honesty, reciprocity*
Appendix 3

Serving Public Purposes in Primary Schools Survey

PURPOSES OF SCHOOLING IN AUSTRALIAN PRIMARY SCHOOLS PROJECT

AUSTRALIAN PRIMARY SCHOOL PRINCIPALS SURVEY

Dear Colleague

I am writing to you to ask you to consider and complete a survey that is designed to gain the views of Australian primary school principals on the purposes of schooling.

The survey will be emailed to you in the next few days and is a key part of an Australian Research Council project that is being conducted in a partnership between researchers from four universities and the Australian Government Primary Principals’ Association (AGPPA). The researchers are:

- Emeritus Professor Alan Reid, University of South Australia
- Honorary Professor Bill Mulford, University of Tasmania
- Associate Professor Neil Cranston, University of Queensland
- Professor Jack Keating, University of Melbourne

The survey has been developed from nearly two years of work around Australia examining the literature and Australian policy documents on the purposes of schools, interviews with policy makers and case studies in a small number of schools.

The project now needs your help in order to gauge the views of primary school principals about the purposes of schooling.

Australian primary school principals have been invited to participate and a high response rate will be crucial in ensuring quality evidence is available to inform current education debates and policy. The results will also be used for the development of professional learning materials for use by principals, their schools and communities (the final stage of the project).

I would like to stress that the survey is voluntary and all survey returns are confidential. The project has gained approval from the University of Melbourne Human Research Ethics Committee and the approval number is 0716803. Only the four researchers will use data from the survey returns.

The project has commissioned Certain Knowledge to administer the electronic survey. You will receive an email from Certain Knowledge that provides access to the survey.

As President of AGPPA I urge you to complete and return the survey as it is important for AGPPA’s future policy directions in the current environment and for the future of schooling in Australia.

The survey will take approximately 20 minutes to complete.

Yours sincerely

Tony McGruther
President
Australian Government Primary Principals Association amcgruther@optusnet.com.au

February, 2009
Dear Principal

Last week you received a letter from me about a research project that involves a partnership between AGPPA and four Australian universities (see attached copy). I am now writing to request that you complete the survey, which can be accessed through the link below.

Australian primary school principals have been invited to participate and it is crucial that we get a high response rate as the project will inform AGPPA policy and influence broader education debates and policy in Australia.

We estimate that the survey will take about 20 minutes to complete. You are urged to complete the survey as soon as possible.

Tony McGruther
President
Australian Government Primary Principals Association

Instructions:
To complete the survey please click on the link below and enter your pin number which is XXXX.

If you would prefer to complete a paper copy you can print the survey and mail it to: XXXX

Should you have any difficulties in accessing the survey please contact XXXX

Enter here ___
PURPOSES OF SCHOOLING IN AUSTRALIAN PRIMARY SCHOOLS PROJECT

AUSTRALIAN PRIMARY SCHOOL PRINCIPALS SURVEY

SECTION A: PRIMARY SCHOOL INFORMATION
1. Post code of your school
2. School system (please check)
   Government □ Catholic □ Independent □
3. Primary only □ Primary + Secondary □ Other □
4. School size (student numbers)
   50 or less □ 51-100 □ 101-200 □
   201-300 □ 301-400 □ 401-500 □
   501-750 □ 750+ □

SECTION B: PRINCIPAL INFORMATION
5. Sex
   Male □ Female □
6. Age
   Less than 30 □ 30-40 □ 41-50 □ 51+ □
7. Years as a principal
   Less than 5 □ 6-10 □ 11-15 □ more than 15 □
8. Years in current school
   Less than 1 □ 1-3 □ 4-8 □ more than 8 □
SECTION C: HOW ARE THE PURPOSES OF SCHOOLING UNDERSTOOD AND ENACTED?

In this section we are interested both in the importance you assign to and the level of enactment in your school of each of the following purposes of schooling and ways of enacting those purposes.

Please respond twice to each item – once for level of importance and once for level of enactment.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Purposes</th>
<th>Level of Importance</th>
<th>Level of enactment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The purposes of schooling are to:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Help students develop a love for learning</td>
<td>1 Very Low</td>
<td>1 Very low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Help students develop basic knowledge and skills for employment</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Help students learn to value diversity</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Promote social cohesion</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Help students develop capacities to become active and responsible</td>
<td>5 Very High</td>
<td>5 Very high</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>members of Australian democratic society</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Contribute to an environmentally sustainable society</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1 Very high</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Reflect and sustain the democratic values of society</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Provide a resource for the local community</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Assist in the development of their local communities</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Start the process of sorting and selecting students into categories</td>
<td>5 Very High</td>
<td>5 Very high</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>that help to determine their later life opportunities</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Compensate for disadvantage among students</td>
<td>1 Very Low</td>
<td>1 Very low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Lay the foundations for a more socially just society</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Strengthen Australia’s economy</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Please don’t dwell over your responses. Your first response is appropriate.

In this section we are interested both in the importance you assign to and the level of enactment in your school of each of the following purposes of schooling and ways of enacting those purposes.

Please respond twice to each item – once for level of importance and once for level of enactment.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Curriculum</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>The school curriculum should:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Allow student involvement in negotiating the curriculum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. Encourage student participation in delivering the curriculum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. Be designed on the understanding that all students can succeed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. Be flexible enough to cater for the needs, interests and abilities of all students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. Give a priority to academic learning in the school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19. Value all learning areas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20. Develop the capacity in students to play an active and informed role in civic life</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21. Be focused upon success in the national literacy and numeracy tests</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22. Be holistic and integrated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23. Ensure that assessment and reporting approaches support student learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24. Ensure that assessment and reporting approaches are used to sort students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25. Promote environmental sustainability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26 Promote respect for and understanding of difference</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Schools should:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27. Make students as the focus for what happens in the school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28. Have enrolment policies and practices that result in a diverse mix of students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29. Have interventions to help compensate for disadvantage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30. Include measures to cater for students with diverse interests and needs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31. Value differences amongst students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32. Allocate extra resources for programs for students with specific or extra learning needs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33. Encourage respect and cooperation among students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34. Encourage students to accept responsibility for their own actions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35. Encourage students’ involvement in school decision making and leadership</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parents and community</th>
<th>Level of importance</th>
<th>Level of enactment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Schools should:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36. Encourage parents in negotiating the curriculum</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>37. Encourage parent involvement in delivering the curriculum</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>38. Be a community resource</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>39. Encourage wider community involvement in the school</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Staff

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Schools should:</th>
<th>Level of importance</th>
<th>Level of enactment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1 Very Low</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40. Promote trust amongst students, staff and parents</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41. Practice decision making processes that are democratic and transparent</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>42. Value and foster the professionalism of teachers</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>43. Involve staff in decision making and leadership</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>44. Foster staff discussions about the purposes of schooling</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### School processes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Schools should:</th>
<th>Level of importance</th>
<th>Level of enactment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1 Very low</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45. Have goals and priorities that primarily reflect the interests of society as a whole</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>46. Employ democratic decision making</td>
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<tr>
<td>47. Foster an open and collaborative teaching culture</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>48. Promote collaboration rather than competition amongst schools</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>49. Contribute to the development of the local community</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>50. Have goals and priorities that concentrate upon the interests of students as individuals</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government policy should:</td>
<td>(A) Level of importance</td>
<td>(B) Level of enactment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
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<td>------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51. Give parents the right to choose a school for their children</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>52. Give emphasis to diversity within schools</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>53. Give emphasis to diversity between schools</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>54. Make schools accountable for social outcomes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55. Ensure community involvement in developing education policy</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>56. Mandate national testing programs</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>57. Mandate league tables based upon test outcomes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>58. Allow for school autonomy from system/employer</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>59. Make schools accountable for academic outcomes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>60. Ensure school involvement in developing education policy</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>61. Fund schools on the basis of need</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>62. Support schools to collaborate with each other</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>63. Ensure that all schools should have transparent enrolment policies</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
SECTION D: FURTHER COMMENTS (optional)
Schools have always served a number of purposes. Some purposes can be described as primarily public in that they advance the common good; others are primarily private in that they advance the interests of individuals.

Please add any further comments under one or more of the following.

58 What factors do you think help to promote the public purposes of schools?:

59 What do you think are the greatest barriers to achieving the public purposes of schools?:

60 Any other comments:

THANK YOU for taking the time to complete this survey.
## Appendix 4: Extent to which Tasmanian teachers and principals believe principals contribute to school capacity building by school success

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Capacity Building Factors and Items</th>
<th>Teachers</th>
<th>Principals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Social Success</td>
<td>Literacy/Numeracy Index</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trust and empowerment</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19. A trusting climate</td>
<td>3.24</td>
<td>4.63</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Staff feeling valued</td>
<td>3.04</td>
<td>4.61</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Staff feeling cared for</td>
<td>3.06</td>
<td>4.55</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. Collaborative decision making</td>
<td>3.22</td>
<td>4.47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Empowered staff</td>
<td>3.37</td>
<td>4.53</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. Leadership distributed</td>
<td>3.39</td>
<td>4.51</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Staff being respectful of each other's opinions</td>
<td>3.30</td>
<td>4.53</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shared and monitored mission and practice</td>
<td>3.06</td>
<td>4.63</td>
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<tr>
<td>23. A shared and coherent sense of direction</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2.97</td>
<td>4.59</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>25. School vision articulated, discussed and communicated to all in school</td>
<td>2.85</td>
<td>4.48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26. School vision articulated, discussed and communicated to all in community</td>
<td>3.31</td>
<td>4.54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27. School results communicated clearly to staff</td>
<td>3.05</td>
<td>4.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>28. School results communicated clearly to other stakeholders</td>
<td>3.60</td>
<td>4.77</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>24. A school that actively shares information with parents and community</td>
<td>2.97</td>
<td>4.22</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>20. Regular monitoring outside school</td>
<td>3.70</td>
<td>4.67</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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<td>21. Critical reflection</td>
<td>3.18</td>
<td>4.42</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>11. Concrete feedback on teaching</td>
<td>2.42</td>
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<tr>
<td>Supported collaborative experimentation</td>
<td>3.31</td>
<td>4.48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. School structures that support teacher initiative/experimentation</td>
<td>3.24</td>
<td>4.47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Staff collaboration to improve student outcomes</td>
<td>3.36</td>
<td>4.66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. Ongoing professional dialogue</td>
<td>3.33</td>
<td>4.52</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>15. Staff work being challenged</td>
<td>3.16</td>
<td>4.33</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. PD relevant to needs of all staff</td>
<td>3.37</td>
<td>4.49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Ongoing PD programs</td>
<td>3.70</td>
<td>4.67</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. High expectations for staff</td>
<td>3.12</td>
<td>4.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other items:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. High expectations for students achievement</td>
<td>3.30</td>
<td>4.48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Empowered students</td>
<td>2.69</td>
<td>4.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Safe school environment</td>
<td>3.31</td>
<td>4.66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22. School winning additional resources</td>
<td>3.21</td>
<td>4.27</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Dif = Difference between Mean

Scores on scale of 1='not at all' to 5='high'

*Lowest 17% and Highest 17% of schools taking account of SES

*Statistically significant using t-test (2-tailed) at the .05 level

^scores on scale of 1='not at all' to 5='high'

(2-tailed) at the .05 level