

# Are we Suffering Reform Fatigue?



**T**HE RAPID change agenda in society has been pressuring education systems across the country to adapt, adjust and align. Vocational education, portability of credentials, profiles, assessment, A.D.D., integration, acceleration and remediation are just a few of the forces fundamentally altering the provision of education. Professionals in the education industry may need to assert, with increasing authority, the traditional values of general education. Socrates, Plato, Aristotle and Rousseau all identified the intrinsic worth of learning, simply for the love of it. Expansion of the mind and challenge of the intellect is as relevant today as it always was. **It is not necessary to measure the value of all things in pecuniary terms.** The vocational Valhalla may prove to be just as illusory as the idealised goal of Rousseau's perfect education.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

*Mr Ron C. Hurley is the Principal of Leumeah Technology High School, in Leumeah, NSW. He is also the President of the NSWSPC.*

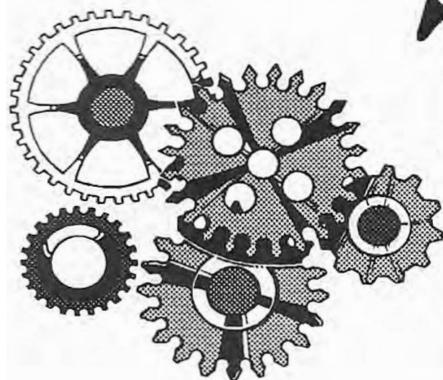
The continuing change of too many educational objectives is perhaps inflicting 'reform fatigue'. It is affecting both institutions and individuals involved in education, across a number of States. The current post-compulsory vocational thrust is perhaps the best example. Highly specialised, industrially approved training for sixteen and seventeen-year-olds may satisfy the short term political goal of so-called 'economic competitiveness'. However, the student launched into hospitality subjects too early may end up being no better off in the employment situation than the student who has studied a broad range of science, technical, cultural or humanities subjects.

Systems need also to consider the affordable levels of education they can provide, in much the same way as they will have to accept affordable air safety, health or defence. Advances in technology are so rapid that all fields of social application will have to look at what is 'sufficient' and affordable, rather than what is 'possible best' and often beyond the capabilities of the budget. Just how much of the community resource, for instance, can be devoted to subsidising persons to obtain multiple PhDs, or, at the other end of the scale, teaching one student to read?

At some point, the State must determine its resource allocation to education and, after that, individual freedom of choice must take over. This was the basis of our very strong and, in

many ways, commendable apprenticeship system. Here, both employer and employee had a vested interest in a direct relationship. Training was occupation-based, with specialised course support from a dedicated vocationally oriented TAFE or private provider. Perhaps the technical expertise developed in the Army Apprentice School, State Rail Workshops or Lithgow Small Arms Factory was a more cost efficient and effective way of educating technicians and technologists. **Expecting all schools to have state-of-the-art computer, business, photography and hospitality facilities is unrealistic.** Devolution or not, at the very least we need some central planning so that specialised schools may develop properly, with adequate facilities to educate people for work in the 21st century. Student freedom of choice should accompany these specialised schools, which probably cannot continue to operate alongside disadvantaged community comprehensive high schools.

The time may have come to review the pedagogy. **When should the individual desire for specialised learning be paid for, or subsidised, by the State and to what age should all students receive, as far as possible, equal access to a general education? The failure to consider these fundamental issues will increase the risk of reform fatigue, as we endeavour to make school education all things to all people, of all ages.** □



# THE NATION

Principals' Association News from the States and Territories

---

## NEW SOUTH WALES

**I**T'S ELECTION TIME, FOLKS! For the best part of twelve months, both major political parties have been gearing up for the March 25 election. In 1990, the Liberal-National Coalition came unexpectedly and perilously close to losing an election they were generally expected to win comfortably. The reason for the close shave was education. There was a voter backlash against the personality and the policies of the then Minister, Terry Metherell. The burning issue was still his 1988 decision to cut about 1,800 teaching positions.

Since 1990, the election game has changed. New South Wales now has a fixed four-year term, with the March 25 date set years in advance. No more surprise elections when governments could go to the people on a high, such as the Olympics 2000 announcement. The Government has patched up its education performance, restoring the lost teacher jobs, settling a salaries dispute in January and providing more counsellors, more computers and a warm-fuzzy Minister who cares, smiles and genuinely likes kids.

In education policies, Labor is uncharacteristically cold-prickly; some would even say feral. Many of their proposals of recent years have been pinched by the Government. Law and order seems to be the issue with a promise to put a 'sin-bin', or isolation room, in every school with special supervision for the 'baddies' to be confined in it. There is talk of rigour, standards, literature and the publishing of individuals' and schools' performance in the papers.

It seems reasonable to think that education will not be as burning an issue this time and that a very close election is expected with a range of policy and local issues determining the result. □

### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

*Mr Jim Harkin is the Principal of Moorefield Girls' High School, in Sydney. He is also the Vice-President of both the NSWSPC and ASPA.*



## PRESIDENT'S REPORT



**W**HY MEASURE teaching effectiveness? There are many different answers to this question. Responses range between the antithesis, i.e., 'that we don't need it at all', to the absolute endorsement, 'that comprehensive, intrusive supervision is not only desirable but essential'. How do we measure the effectiveness of plumbers, doctors, lawyers or secretaries? When these people finish their work, the tap either works or it doesn't, the patient recovers or dies, the accused is found guilty or innocent or the letter is correct or riddled with errors. What, then, is different about education? Why is a form of teacher appraisal, other the measurement of an immediately observable outcome, deemed necessary? Probably because education seeks to develop people in so many ways. Many of its outcomes are intangible and difficult to observe. Education is much more than a simple product or service; it is a complex lifelong process which is never complete and has no absolute form or end.

### Early Attempts

For many years in NSW, there were inspectors who, through experience and expertise, were considered credible independent assessors. Their demise was hastened by the onset of the democratisation movement and the artificiality of the infrequent visit. Since then, the search for an alternative has waxed and waned, sometimes favouring peer review, sometimes following hierarchical supervision models. However, some things never change. Expectations in the 60s were underpinned by the same sentiments as they are today. Put simply, administrators, politicians and the community at large still need some reassurance that those teaching the next generation are worthy of the role, and doing an important job well.

### Real Purpose of Appraisal

We can now focus on the real value and purpose of staff appraisal. If it gives feedback leading to improvement, or commendation resulting in satisfaction, then the results are positive. The satisfactory become good and the excellent feel appreciated. If, however,

the emphasis is on the negative, on flaws and faults, then the process is damaging and destructive. Worthwhile professional appraisal will balance positive reinforcement with constructive suggestion. It will be most fruitful if it is self-generated. Teachers who embrace the principles of student self-assessment invariably need little external appraisal to stimulate self-improvement. That is not to say, however, that external criteria should not be included in an appraisal regime. Failure to embrace fundamental factors because they are overlooked, or elected as inconsequential, could result in an invalid or biased appraisal. There needs to be a balance between negotiated criteria and external criteria.

Most articles on appraisal become squeamish when considering the borderline or marginally efficient cases. Teacher performance is a continuum, and to deny this is to deny a fundamental truth. There will be differences of opinion in this grey area but with clearly defined procedure and appeal mechanisms, the safety of teachers and students can be assured. A review by a supervisor, a peer and another independent person provides a balance which respects professional integrity but still recognises accountability. Let us remember that our vocation is quintessentially based on co-operation and team work. Our appraisal methods should be the same. □

#### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

**Mr Ron Hurley** is the President of the NSWSPC and is also the Principal of Leumeah Technology High School, in Leumeah, NSW.

## NSW SPC NEWS

**T**HE WORKLOAD FOR THOSE involved in Principals' Council activities has increased exponentially in recent years. This is a logical consequence of educational change, decentralised management and increasingly centralised policy determination. The paradox of central planning and decentralised implementation presents special challenges. On one hand, the lean frequently restructured central bureaucracy often lacks recent corporate experience of schools and generates a policy advice function for the Council. On the other hand, the increasingly decentralised management challenges presented to principals generate concerns which the Council need to take up as advocates in a reactive mode.

### Expanded Executive

The state council in New South Wales has had two significant constitutional revisions in three years, reflecting the need to meet changing

demands with sanity preserving structures. The executive has been expanded. Three Vice Presidents give support to the President. Each has specific duties which mirror the structures of the Department of School Education. One Vice President manages Teaching and Learning, another Resources while the third manages Special Programs, including ASPA, Training and Development and the APAPDC. Each Vice President has established a number of sub-committees to work in specific areas. The Secretary manages vital meetings and assists in overall co-ordination while the Treasurer manages all finances and sponsorship.

A new executive position, that of Information Manager, has been created to co-ordinate communication to principals - this area was seen to be in real need of improvement. The Information Manager is also the Contributing Editor to *Principal Matters* and co-ordinates the Council's newsletter. The state executive includes two appointed members who work on specific programs and assist the elected office bearers as needed. The total executive is therefore nine. Five years ago, it was four.

### A Keylinked Executive

The complete executive meets with the ten regional presidents once a term. As a group of nine, it meets once a term. Teleconferences are used between meetings. Usually only two or three executive members meet with the Director General or the Minister. This spreads the workload and eases travel fatigue. One innovative project, initiated by the Treasurer in 1995 has put all executive members on Keylink so that they are now able to communicate by electronic means.

### The Convention

It's still not too late to register for the second International Confederation of Principals Convention, to be held in Sydney from 6-10 August. It seems likely that between 1,000 and 1,500 principals and school leaders will gather in Darling Harbour (Sydney) in what will be the biggest gathering of principals from around the world ever held.

This is a convention for all primary, secondary, government and non-government school principals and is great value at \$395 for 5 days of presentations, seminar, workshop informal discussions and sharing. If you have not yet registered, please contact John Mulready at Conference Action, phone 02-956-8333 or fax (02) 956 5154. □

#### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

**Mr Jim Harkin** is a Vice President (Special Programs) of the New South Wales Secondary Principals' Council. He is also the Principal of Moorefield Girls' High School, in Kogarah, NSW.

*Two principals, Judith O'Brien from NSW and Avril Salter from Victoria, both describe performance appraisal in their respective States. Readers will be left with the overwhelming impression that principals across Australia face many common issues.*

*In the first article, Judith O'Brien describes a study she conducted, evaluating performance appraisal for principals in the Metropolitan West region of the NSW Department of School Education.*



# Performance Appraisal for Principals

**T**HE ATTITUDES OF PRINCIPALS in three clusters in the Metropolitan West Region of the New South Wales Department of School Education (DSE) was the subject of a recent study I conducted in NSW. The study focused on the implementation of the **Performance Evaluation and Review Scheme for Principals** during 1992.

## Three Key Factors

My reading of the literature of policy making, policy implementation and personnel evaluation led me to the conclusion that three important factors would affect the implementation process.

First, there are **affective** factors based on the personalities of the principal and director, the interpersonal skills of the participants, and the climate of the interviews. These were grouped as factors related to implementation on an individual, personal level, for the purposes of the study. Second, there is a set of factors relating to **implementation at a sys-**

**tems level.** Thirdly, the **content** of the appraisal, rather than the individual and system response to implementation, is important. This revolves around the question of whether a scheme which measures the accountability of the individual to the system can also serve the needs of the individual.

The literature of social learning theory suggested a fourth factor which could be relevant to how principals perceive performance appraisal. Rotter (1966) concluded that the variety of behavioural choices in a broad band of life situations could be affected by whether people believed that there was a causal relationship between their own actions and behaviour, and the consequences that occurred. Persons who believed in this causal relationship were considered to have an internal locus of control. I was interested to find out if principals who display this characteristic had a positive attitude to their changing work environment.

## What the Study Examined

The implementation of the Performance Evaluation and Review Scheme for Principals was evaluated in the light of the above factors. Specific study questions were as follows.

### Question 1

Do the **principals' perceptions of the success** of the Performance Evaluation and Review Scheme for Principals suggest that it met its objectives: overall; in relation to implementation on an individual, personal level (Factor A); in relation to implementation on a system level (Factor B); and, in meeting the needs of both individuals and the system (Factor C)?

### Question 2

Are there **differences between the perceived success** of the Performance Evaluation and Review Scheme for Principals (overall, and considering the three factors listed in Question 1) related to: specific clusters; age; gender; primary/secondary principals; merit/seniority appointments; number of years as a principal; and, number of years in current position?

### Question 3

What is the **relationship between the level of internal versus external control** identified in principals and their perceptions of the success of the Performance Evaluation and Review Scheme for Principals (Factor D)?

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

**Ms Judith O'Brien** is the Principal of Peter Board High School, in North Ryde, NSW.



## Results of the Study

Table 1. Frequency Distribution of Responses

	REDUCED FIVE POINT INTERVAL SCALE				
	Strong Positive Attitude	Positive Attitude	Undecided	Negative Attitude	Strong Negative Attitude
Total $\bar{x}=3.7$ $s=0.6$	4 11.4% of Ss	21 60.0% of Ss	9 25.7% of Ss	1 2.9% of Ss (Y1)	0
Factor A $\bar{x}=4.0$ $s=0.6$	7 20.0% of Ss	25 71.4% of Ss	2 5.7% of Ss (Y6, Y8)	1 2.9% of Ss (Y1)	0
Factor B $\bar{x}=3.2$ $s=0.7$	3 8.6% of Ss	10 28.6% of Ss	17 48.6% of Ss	5 14.2% of Ss (Y1, Y6, Y8, X7, X11)	0
Factor C $\bar{x}=3.7$ $s=0.7$	7 20.0% of Ss	17 48.6% of Ss	8 22.8% of Ss	3 8.6% of Ss (Y1, X7, X11)	0
Factor D $\bar{x}=3.9$ $s=0.6$	9 25.7% of Ss	17 48.6% of Ss	8 22.8% of Ss	1 2.9% of Ss (Y1)	0

(Note: Subject Y1 scored all aspects of the scheme as negative; other negative scores were limited to 4 other subjects, X7, X11, Y6 & Y8.)

The main tool for measurement was the Performance Appraisal Attitude Scale, devised by the researcher. The following statistical tests were applied to the data.

- All items, factors and totals, measures of central tendency and variability were calculated.
- The responses to items within each factor were correlated with the total score for each factor to assess internal consistency of the factors.
- The t-test was applied to investigate differences in relation to gender, primary versus secondary principal, and seniority versus merit selection.
- An analysis of variance was applied to investigate differences among clusters, and principals appointed by seniority, comparative assessment or local selection on merit.
- Correlation was used to study relationships between age, the number of years as a principal and the number of years in the current position on one hand, and attitudes to appraisal on the other.
- Correlations were calculated between scores for locus of control and attitudes to appraisal.

All statistical analysis was completed using *StatView Student* (Abacus Concepts, 1991) for the Macintosh computer system. More detailed statistical data to support the results is obtainable from the author.

## Uneven Approval

The results of this study indicated that overall, the majority of principals in the sample perceived the introduction of the performance appraisal scheme as positive. However, individual and system level factors, and the balance between them, were not perceived to be equally positive, and not all items within each factor were perceived to be of similar importance.

## High Scores

Implementation at a personal level (Factor A) was highly rated by principals. This appears to be most related to the ability of principals

and directors of schools to establish a communication style conducive to supporting a collegial and professional framework in which to relate. Although the item about union views on performance appraisal (*the NSW Teachers Federation attitude to performance appraisal adversely affected the principal's comfort level about the appraisal process*) scored some level of support from 25.7 per cent of principals, the level of compliance with the scheme, and support for it, was high in most of the sample.

## Motives Suspect

Implementation at a system level (Factor B) was rated by principals as the least successful factor. There was evidence that principals lack trust in relation to the DSE's motives in introducing performance appraisal and the Department's likelihood to act honourably in relation to strategies designed to protect the rights of participants, such as appeals mechanisms and confidentiality. Also, the area of training and development was considered by principals to be deficient and was perceived to be the greatest area of failure for the DSE.

That one scheme could meet the needs of both the individual and the system (Factor C) was accepted for the most part. Principals perceived that linking their performance management to the priorities and plans which should support the educational needs of students was a reasonable action, 82.9 per cent supporting a link with DSE priorities and 80 per cent supporting a link with school development plans. There was less agreement that a principal's professional development, career enhancement and ability as a school leader would be improved as a result of the performance appraisal scheme.

## Other Findings

For the most part, there were no significant differences between the attitudes of different groups of principals in relation to age, gender, primary versus secondary schools, merit versus seniority appointments and the number of years in the current position.

There was a significant but relatively weak correlation between the number of years respondents had been principals and their scores for Factor C ( $r = -0.4$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ;  $df = 33$ ). **As this correlation is in a negative direction, it indicates that the less experienced a principal is, the more likely he or she would be to agree that the appraisal scheme could meet both the needs of the system and the individual in the system.** In addition, small differences ( $F = 4.6$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ) were apparent between the principals when grouped in clusters in respect to their scores for Factor B, suggesting that one cluster of principals felt

slightly more positive about implementation at a Departmental level.

There was a high correlation between Factor D, that is, locus of control, and all other scores collected (i.e. from  $r = 0.72$  to  $r = 0.86$ , when any  $r > 0.33$  was significant at the 0.05 level with  $df = 33$ ). The high score achieved by the majority of principals in relation to internal locus of control indicates that they are prepared to be proactive in their response to change. That some degree of cynicism was displayed in relation to the purpose of performance management supports Rotter's claim that people with internal locus of control are more likely to be 'resistive to subtle attempts to influence him [sic]' (1966:25).

## Implications of the Results

The major implications of the results and the conclusions of this study are as follows.

1. The principal's ability to communicate in a collegial and professional manner with the school staff and, in turn, the school staff's ability to do likewise with other teachers, will have a major bearing on the success of the extension of the program.
2. The leadership style of the principal in relation to collaboration with teachers and the degree of staff participation in, and contribution to, school renewal plans, will have an impact on how well teachers accept their performance appraisal being linked to DSE and school priorities.
3. Whether training and development needs are addressed competently will affect the success of the scheme.
4. While union activity did not unduly influence principal compliance with, or support for, the performance appraisal scheme, it is more likely to affect teacher compliance. Principals have been more acclimatised to the change in culture that has occurred within schools and the Department than have the majority of teachers.
5. The high correlation between locus of control and positive attitude to performance appraisal suggests that non-assertive teachers, or those for whom empowerment has not resulted from the leadership style within the school, could have a negative attitude to the scheme. This negative outcome is likely to occur with both extremes of non-assertion: the aggressive and the passive. □

## References

- Abacus Concepts. (1991). *StatView Student*. Berkeley: Abacus Concepts Inc.
- Rotter, J.B. (1966). *Generalised expectancies for internal versus external control of reinforcement*. Washington: The American Psychological Association Inc. Psychological Monographs: General and Applied.



## Learn by Sharing

BY THE TIME THIS ARTICLE for *Principal Matters* is published, I will have concluded my term as NSW State President. I hope in future I will still write for our journal, perhaps less often, but with more inspired pieces. Too often, intelligent, well educated principals, with a wealth of knowledge and experience, refrain from sharing with colleagues their views on a wide range of educational issues. I urge all readers of *Principal Matters* to contribute well researched, though provoking articles. Only by contributing can we expand our own horizons and maintain and improve the standard and reputation of our journal.

## Our Themes

This issue, on students at-risk and vocational education, draws attention to the impact of keeping students for longer in what, for some, might be described as a state of institutional

### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

At the time of writing, **Mr Ron Hurley** was the President of the NSWSPC. He is currently the Principal of Leumeah Technology High School, in Leumeah, NSW.

suspended animation. In many cases, society's expectations regarding the length of education inflicts, on some defenceless adolescents, an existence which is neither satisfying nor productive. It places them at risk through frustration, boredom and disenchantment.

## Restrictive Structures

We need a much more flexible approach to the postcompulsory years of schooling. Students need a greater range of effective options, including remedial programs, recreational courses, vocational pursuits or a general liberal arts education. Only by providing a more relevant structure can we diminish the number of students dissatisfied and, therefore, at risk. Retention of the current restrictive structures, based on largely geographic parameters, needs review, as does the whole six-year secondary school structure.

We are caught in a time warp, trying to match 1990s demands with 1960s structures. It is paradoxical to speak of schools specialising and offering freedom of choice and, at the same time, serving only their local community. We end up with two schools in one, increasing the difficulties for students at-risk. If a school specialises in particular vocational

education strands, or performing arts, or challenging educative programs, it cannot also be a local area comprehensive. We need to decide which priority is the greater, and build on it. Students at-risk need special staff, special school ethos and special resources. Vocational schools need the same thing - special staff, special school ethos and special resources. Someone must have the courage to determine whether our essential educational purpose is egalitarian inclusive comprehensive education for all, or specialised education to meet specific needs. If we continue to 'hedge our bets', we are destined to perpetuate competition for resources, rather than complementary resourcing. We will fail to cater adequately for students at-risk and for vocational courses.

Perhaps the answer lies in determining at precisely which point in education we should change our emphasis from comprehensive education for all to specialised needs-based provision. We accepted, long ago, specialisation into vocational training at universities, TAFE or private business colleges.

It may now be appropriate to decide at exactly which point this specialisation should best occur. □

## PRESIDENT'S REPORT

WE ARE ALL WAITING. The first school term of the new Government has ended and still we are waiting. A couple of enquiries are being set up into such things as the HSC and the implementation of Profiles but these are still in the data collection stage.

No implementation guidelines for the Government's broad brush election promises have yet appeared - at least in the schools sector. As often happens, the first action is at the top of the bureaucracy. The Head of TAFE, Dr Gregor Ramsey, and 300 head office TAFE staff have gone.

A new Department combining TAFE and Vocational Training has been created. More downsizing of the Senior Executive Service, including Directors of Schools, is expected. It is becoming clear that government initiatives in its preferred areas of technology, literacy, community languages, and so on, will only be funded at the expense of other pro-

grams.

In the waiting period, two major players have moved to take over the media and educational attention. Denis Fitzgerald is the new Teachers' Federation President, replacing Phil Cross, who has entered the free market economy of insurance. After the Union's annual conference, Mr Fitzgerald announced that teachers would enforce a complete moratorium on educational change until the end of 1996, largely because there had been too much change with too little consultation with teachers.

It will be interesting to see if this Canute-like stand, which elevates to dogma the traditional Federation opposition to the details of any change, will be effective.

The Federation of Parents & Citizens Association is actively seeking greater influence, even control, in the educational agenda. Their position on school voluntary contributions, and their support of a student from one school because of an incident allegedly involving drugs, have both been forcefully expressed in the media.

School-based parent organisations, although affiliated with the Federation, are not as united as the P&C leadership would suggest. The parent body at the ex-

cluded students' school, for example, supported the principal and the teachers. In many other schools, parents support the setting and collection of school contributions.

If the Minister for Education, John Aquilina, continues to stay in the background, it seems likely that parent and teachers' organisations will clamour in to seize the day. These days for any government to have a high profile education agenda? □

teacher organisation the void and at- Is it possible ernment not to cation agenda?

### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

**Mr Jim Harkin** is the newly elected President of the NSWSPC. He is also the Principal of Moorefield Girls Technology High School.







# Tensions Increase as Positions Diminish



## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

**Mr Jim Harkin** is the President of the New South Wales Secondary Principals Council. He is also the Principal of Moorefield Girls Technology High School, in Kogarah, NSW.

**T**HE ONLY CERTAINTY ABOUT the selection and appointment of principals is the inevitable arguments about the process. It is nearly a decade since we began to phase out the system of external validation (inspection) to determine eligibility, followed by an appointment made on strict seniority, from an eligibility list. In those days, only deputy principals were eligible for inspection, whereas now there is open advertisement, application by resume, and panel interviews for local selection.

If anything, the tensions have increased. There is little, if any, desire to return to the past but arguments still rage over the following:

- to what extent should there be a balance between generic and school specific criteria for any position?;
- should the selection process be defined and uniform or should it be flexible to allow for, say, re-interviews or even presentations?;
- should applications focus on past achievements, or project to the future and address issues in the specific vacant position?;

- do selection panels select people like themselves (homosocial reproduction) and, if so, how can we ensure that there is variety and a mixture of leadership styles in schools?;
- how can resumes, and even work reports written by principals, be externally validated? Can selection panels believe what they read or do they have to become expert in analysing omissions, innuendos and faint praise?; and,
- why are few practising principals appointed to schools using local selection? Are the 'gunners' (I'm gunna do this; I'm gunna do that) more attractive to selection panels than the quiet achievers? Should practising principals have a priority consideration?

**In New South Wales it's becoming increasingly academic, anyway, as few principals positions are being advertised, at least in desirable areas.**

As the Government downsizes the Senior Executive Service, many former directors are exercising their right of return and taking up positions as principals. Principals are being appointed at a younger age, and there is virtually no career path beyond that position. All this means fewer vacancies, increased competition and even more analysis of the selection process, especially by those who are 'blocked' from being promoted or moving laterally. **The harder it is to get a job, the more the process is subject to criticism.** □

## Making the News

### PERSECUTION ALLEGATIONS

**A** FORMER STUDENT of a western Sydney high school has sought compensation before the Anti-Discrimination Board for alleged anti-gay persecution.

Under new anti-vilification laws, the complainant sought compensation from the principal, deputy principal and teachers for remarks and actions which, he alleges, caused him to abandon his HSC. If the matter is not settled at this level, the case may be taken to the Equal Opportunity Tribunal, where a maximum of \$40,000 damages could be awarded.

### NO BUILDING MAINTENANCE

**S**ECUNDARY SCHOOLS may note with interest the proliferation of on-line tertiary courses offered on the World Wide Web by an increasing range of 'virtual universities'. Students seeking general qualifications and

professional training courses in a wide range of subjects can now access the Globewide Network Academy, which is a consortium of educational and research organisations. In August, as many as 50 courses were listed under the auspices of GNA, including an accredited PhD level course in robotics. Course costs range from \$US 100-320 per subject.

Other institutions offering courses around the globe include Athena University (344 courses); Institute of Baltic Studies (11 courses); Rogers State College, USA (four degree programs) and the On-Line Campus of the New York Institute of Technology (a variety of BA and BSc courses).

### TEACHERS TO WEAR GLOVES

**T**HIRTY NSW SCHOOLS are to trial a program in which teachers are banned from touching students, unless they are wearing plastic gloves. In a move to prevent the spread of infectious diseases, teachers are ex-

pected to carry the gloves at all times, both inside and outside the classroom. Students at the schools are also to be taught infection control procedures.

### DIRECT LINK

**S**TUDENTS AT Warrnambool College, in Victoria, have raised sufficient money to buy a fax machine for their sister school, Kotamadaya Senior High School, in Indonesia. Funds have also been donated for the maintenance of the machine. The cooperative sister school arrangement enriches cultural and language studies at both ends.

### END NEAR FOR BACHELORS?

**A** RECENT RULING by a Canadian court has determined that the word 'bachelor' should be removed from the degree certificate of a female student who objected to its gender orientation. □