

1983 – Future Directions

President - Nancye Harris, **Secretary** - Barry O'Donnell, **Research Officer** - Colin Cooksey.

Major Papers/Reports

- 'Future Directions of Secondary Education in NSW' (April 1983) proposed that a Board of Secondary Education (BSE) be established with a range of members, including principals nominated by the Council, to advise the Minister on education in Years 7-12. The BSE would:
 - Provide a curriculum continuum over Years 7-12 catering for students with a wide range of needs, interests and aspirations through an essential core of learning for all plus a balance of compulsory and optional studies including school-devised courses.
 - Make it possible to select an organisational pattern most appropriate to local needs, with syllabuses available in semester modules and students able to select a mix of academic and/or general/vocational courses.
 - Provide advice to schools concerning the structuring and sequencing of courses and develop procedures for student accreditation and certificates at the end of four, five or six years of secondary schooling.
 - Develop strategies with TAFE to provide maximum benefit from cooperative programs.
 - Develop, in cooperation with the non- government school authorities, a model for the regular monitoring of the effectiveness of educational programs in all secondary schools in NSW.
- 'The Report of the Independent Committee on Policy and Procedures for School Non Attenders' recommended the establishment of school welfare committees, planned intervention by schools in the non-attendance process, a nominated person (maybe a teacher) able to provide 1:1 contact, early identification and involvement of the parents, a school counsellor ratio of 1:1,000 students and a Regional Guidance Officer ratio of 1:10,000 (rather than the existing 1:16,000). Concerns were raised about the closure of residential Youth and Community Services (YACS) institutions and the practice of courts requiring offenders on bonds to attend school.

Major Impacts on DoE, Schools and Principals

- The Commonwealth Schools Commission (CSC) presented a proposal to establish school/community committees to advise principals on school curriculum, student and parent counselling and student accreditation. Their proposal that the community be involved in the selection of principals was not accepted by SPC as they believed that more effective outcomes could be achieved by providing better support and training to those already appointed.
- The SPC response to the CSC's 'Draft Paper on Schools and TAFE' (1982) was recognised by the Commission as the only one to point out that the report had a TAFE focus and didn't acknowledge the roles schools played through their knowledge and understanding of how young people viewed the world and what their motivations were. This SPC response:
 - Questioned whether this paper was an attempt to combat unemployment or to establish which educational system or pattern of studies would enable "young people to participate effectively in our changing society."
 - Expressed concern that the assertion that "TAFE could be a solution to greater retention rates" didn't recognise that school teachers were trained to develop attitudes and values (developing the whole child) whilst TAFE teachers had skills in specific vocational areas but were not trained to work with young people.
 - Acknowledged that allowing schools greater flexibility in course design, reducing the Board of Senior School Studies' restrictions on the curriculum and upgrading school facilities would allow schools to better cater for young people and their future needs.

- A paper on Computer Education initiatives gave a rationale for a national program to ensure computers could be used to meet the educational needs of students, with funds allocated across sectors to provide equitable distribution and to meet minimal standards.

Key Issues

1. Council Structures

- Recognising Council's increased role in working with DoE on evaluating policy and practices without additional resourcing, the SPC's Research Officer was asked to identify major policy initiative areas, draw together issues of concern to principals, liaise with Regional Councils, recommend priorities and procedures to the Executive and Management Committee and establish structures to enable the Council to be more responsive to key issues.
- Regional Councils were asked to identify committees or informal groups of principals prepared to assist in evaluating proposals and formulating policy. They were to inform the Research Officer of initiatives and items discussed by their Council and this led to various regions presenting papers and leading discussion at the November plenary meeting on school finance committees, choice and diversity, disturbances in schools, executive staffing, sports policy and school vandalism.
- SPC Management Committee meetings were restructured to have Regional representative reports at the beginning of the meeting (rather than at the end when time might run out), a focus on one or two major issues and a requirement for well-researched and professionally-presented papers to reduce the time taken up with routine matters.
- A Council staffing survey at the start of 1983 received 40 responses. Thirteen schools were affected by late executive appointments, 30% had major differences in Year 7 numbers, school establishments varied from -30 to +60 and the survey indicated that there could potentially be 101 unfilled positions in the first month across 26 of these schools.
- A Western Region response to the EEO proposals for changes to the transfer and promotion system agreed on the need to remove discrimination against women. However, the effect on the quality of education had not been discussed and this, it was felt, could severely disadvantage children in less favourable areas of the State as the statistics in the report were suspect and gave an unrealistic definition of female mobility. Plans for limiting tenure and limits on promotion lists were accepted together with further research on the benefits of establishing separate lists for men and women.
- Met West Region proposed that Year 7 classes should generate 1.5 staff rather than 1.4 to allow for reduction in class sizes in the practical subjects (schools currently had to take periods from other years to achieve this). Similarly, North West Region proposed that the small school concession be 0.5 for less than 500 students.
- Concern existed over regional differences in defining General Activity and Special Needs students and the allocation of significantly different staffing resources.
- The Council advocated that Computer Awareness in Years 7-9 should be part of the total school curriculum rather than a separate course as recommended by the Computer Support Group. Council sought greater assistance from DoE in this process and in the administrative use of computers.

2. Relationships with the Department

- The 1983 Annual Conference 'Assessing the Education Needs for the 80's' involved group workshops on equal employment opportunity, the industrial role of the principal, community participation in the selection of principals, professional development of executive staff, the disturbed child, use of computers in administration, and freedom versus accountability. These workshops were led by DoE officers (selected by the DDG in consultation with Council as being key developers of policy, rather than just the most senior person in that area). The DG led the discussion on 'Future Directions of Secondary Education in NSW'.
- The Council's response to the 'Future Directions' paper (prepared by Met North Region SPC) recognised a general acceptance of the need to change and the general thrust of the paper. It was agreed that

adequate time must be allowed for planning and publicity to provide a firm basis for community understanding and acceptance. Other points were:

- Agreement that there should be 'an essential core of learning for all students', broadly based on the 'learning areas' in the Base Paper.
 - The semester organisation as proposed in the McGowan Report was not a prescribed obligatory organisation of courses in semester units but required assessment in such areas. The courses would need to be linked in a sequential/lateral pattern to satisfy study in compulsory/optional areas.
 - The organisational patterns of curriculum suggestions were: 1+3+2 (Yr 7+Yrs 8-10+Yrs 11-12) or 2+2+2 (Yrs 7-8+Yrs 9-10+Yrs 11-12) but should not include 3+3 (Yrs 7-9+Yrs 10-12) as Years 11 and 12 should retain the essential core of learning offered under the A, B and C course proposals of the HSC Restructuring Paper. Any accreditation should have state-wide comparability and schools would require the provision of adequate computer facilities.
 - The monitoring of all schools was considered essential but there was a division on the form it might take.
 - A greater need would exist in the proposed restructuring for teachers with experience and expertise in curriculum development, counselling, student welfare and timetabling.
 - It was strongly recommended that the concept of the 'four term year' and the establishment of senior high schools/colleges be investigated.
- Council proposed that to gain political and community support for such changes each proposal should include a rationale, the impact on school curriculum and any resource implications.
 - With the proposal to set up the Participation and Equity Program, Council expressed concern that the allocation of DoE staff numbers was disproportionate to those staff allocated to schools. The Transition Education Program was indicative of this concern, where there were 18 staff in Head Office, 32 in Regional Offices and yet there were only 101 positions in schools.
 - Council's position on developing policies for the establishment and abolition of subject master/mistress positions was that:
 - Any proposals are given to principals and inspectors for comment before inclusion.
 - Entitlements are related to pupil numbers, teaching periods and number of teachers.
 - Variations in period lengths and curriculum structures (1+3 or 2+2 over Years 7-10) be considered and compensated for.
 - Allowance is made for small entry subjects and 3/4 Unit courses in Years 11-12.
 - In the first two months of 1983, when schools were managing staffing, general administration and the start of the new school year, they received and were expected to respond to the following documents: Aboriginal Studies, Driver Education, Transition Education, Multicultural Education, Energy Conservation and Personal Development.
 - In recognition of the large volume of documents received by schools from DoE Directorates, Regional Offices and Study Boards the DDG agreed that in future documents would be sent to a nominated Senior Officer to monitor distribution timelines and provide quality control.
 - Concerns were expressed about the increasing costs of projector globes, batteries, repairs to duplicators and offset printers and the need for an increase in the maintenance grant.

3. Teachers Federation

- Ned Lynch, Bulli High School (South Coast Region) presented a proposal to Council to solve the extras issue. If adopted this would help resolve the impact of extras on the quality of education in unsupervised classes and the inequitable workloads that existed between schools where extras were taken and those where they were not.
 - All parties to aim to develop an agreed policy by the end of 1983
 - Principals be given the freedom to use casual relief funds in more effective ways and submit monthly returns for audit against allocated casual days and the policy

- Where relief is unavailable, the industrial agreement should allow for payments to teachers for taking these additional periods.

4. Study Boards

- The Secondary Schools Board (SSB) began a 10-year plan to implement new curriculum outlined previously in the Base Paper and the McGowan Report.
- The SSB clarified its policy on attendance requirements and early leaving to enter employment.
- The Board of Senior School Studies (BSSS) registered TAFE Colleges offering HSC courses.
- The BSSS established a committee to review responses to earlier proposals for Year 11/12 courses.
- Concerns were again expressed about the failure of the Boards to integrate cross-curriculum perspectives into syllabuses, leaving schools to implement and integrate these perspectives into their school curriculum. In many schools, insufficient copies of documents were provided for this to be effective.

Other issues

- Sixty School Facilities Committees were established on a trial basis across the State to manage maintenance issues within schools.
- The DoE Choice and Diversity Program had minimal impact with Armidale introducing dezoning and The Port Hacking Project, involving Caringbah HS, Endeavour HS and Sylvania HS sharing senior courses across campuses.

Items of Interest

- The Council initiated an award of \$300 for the state high school student with the top aggregate mark in the HSC.
- As a consequence of Council's negotiation with DoE re staffing at the start of the school year, approval was granted for the immediate employment of casuals of the start of the 1984 school year. These appointments were to continue until the school's enrolment review took place. The previous guidelines for subject master/mistress positions no longer applied. Decisions on positions for 1984 were based on the strength of the school's case provided it was consistent with the 1983 Term 1 staff return. This allowed greater flexibility in executive appointments.