

1980 – Coming of Age

SPC President – Bruce Bensley; **Secretary** – Al Kemp; **Research Officer** – Bill Myles.

Major Papers/Reports

- ‘Report to the Director-General on Principals Councils in NSW’, May 1980 (*see summary on page 4*)
- ‘The Systematic Use of Principals to carry out Inspections of Teachers, rather than using Departmental Inspectors’: J Hale, Western Region
- ‘Sport, Educational Excursions and Vacation Tours’: N Lynch, South Coast Region – with a review of the 1979 policy recommending that principals, rather than directors, approve overnight excursions
- Proposed ‘School Facilities Committees’ to encourage community use of schools – these were to be broad-based committees chaired by the principal
- ‘National Report on Education and Employment and the Introduction of Transition Education’ – with ongoing concerns about funding and student eligibility for the School Certificate.

Council Matters

- There was concern about relationships between Regional Councils and State Council as major issues were not being considered at the local level prior to State meetings.
- A Plenary Meeting management review found Council tended to be re-active rather than pro-active when putting forward views on key issues and recommended it should be making specific recommendations to better support principals and schools.
- DoE officers’ reluctance to attend the SPC Annual Conference out of hours supported a very strong case for using two school days.
- The DoE agreed to release four principals to attend the Australian High School Principals’ Association (AHSPA) Conference, but only fund two. Council decided to fund the other two. DoE assured Council that all principals would be released to attend the 1982 AHSPA Conference in Sydney. It would receive significant funding, including accommodation and travel for country principals and other costs associated with using the Sydney Opera House as the venue.
- The President sent a memo to principals advising them not to implement any part of any Teachers Federation policies at variance with DoE instructions.

Relationships with the Department

- A committee was established to investigate further choice and diversity in schools, e.g. The Entrance HS’s semester length courses (‘vertical semester system’), the Port Hacking cluster system where schools specialised and senior pupils could transfer for some subjects, the dezoning of schools in Armidale and a trial of a senior high school.
- Council was concerned that filling of teaching vacancies off the waiting list, rather than looking at experience, quality and merit, meant that many top quality graduates were being lost to the non-government sector.
- The embargo on reducing Social Science teachers and the need for a staffing buffer for schools with declining enrolments were significant problems. The issue also applied to ancillary staffing where Public Service Association (PSA) policy reduced principals’ options and caused a loss of key staff.
- The policy of placing nominated transfers into the nearest school vacancy was of great concern to country schools, as this reduced the number of positions available in more favourable areas for those staff in rural and remote areas seeking transfers.
- One of the main powers/functions of the NSW Education Commission (established by the Wran Government that year) was to be the primary advisory body to the Minister on educational policies, priorities and planning. This reduced Council’s capacity to negotiate with the Minister and DoE on significant issues affecting schools and principals.

- Not realising that 22% of schools had integrated sport with teachers being asked to teach additional periods in lieu of sport, the DoE advised that a policy would be prepared when the legal position was clarified and the DoE found out what the original industrial agreement was.
- DoE advised that the textbook allowance would be doubled for 1981.

The Study Boards

- There were problems identified with the limited distribution of HSC circulars and the subsequent demand on schools to provide copies to staff.
- Many HSC papers contained errors and not all schools were contacted about such issues.
- The Chairman of the ongoing Parliamentary Review of the School Certificate, Brian McGowan, pointed out that education had moved from an elitist model into a mass system and he was concerned that whilst only 10% left early in South Australia, 40% left at or before the School Certificate in NSW.
- Principals were concerned about the requirements for end of year attendance of Year 10.

The Teachers Federation

- The Principal at Dover Heights BHS was accused of breaching Federation policy by asking a teacher to teach outside his area and subsequently providing a disputed report of a P&C meeting that supported his actions. The Council met with the DoE and made representation to the TF. The DoE legal adviser provided possible actions for intervention by the DoE but these were not taken up, resulting in punitive action against the principal.
- The Teachers Federation circular 'Teachers may refuse to teach more than 27 periods' led to an Industrial Commission ruling that a teacher's load was never defined as 27 periods.
- A DG's memorandum advised principals and teachers that posted timetables and rosters were an instruction to teachers. Failure to comply was to be referred to the Regional Office.
- Following an industrial dispute, procedures were drawn up in consultation with the TF to manage complaints against teachers. While fairness to teachers was important, concerns were expressed about protections for students, the observer's role and the need for a support person for principals.
- Following negotiations, a draft policy on 'in-school' relief was published for implementation in a number of trial schools in 1981. This allowed one period reduction for 2/3 of staff to form a pool of relief periods.
- The salaries case in the industrial commission was stood over because of the '28 period' dispute and consequently many teachers and administrators delayed their retirement.

Other Matters

- Problems were again identified in getting three quotes for school maintenance work. It was suggested that 'declined to quote' be recognised as one of the three quotes required.
- Council requested reimbursement of travel expenses for ancillary and teaching staff carrying out banking and other school business.
- Responsibility for after school supervision was not resolved.
- The working party on school records looked at what types of documents were needed and how they could be shared between schools without breaching privacy.
- A proposal was put forward to reinstate regional auditors or appoint a registrar/bursar in schools.

Items of Interest

- A Regional Director reported that the DG (Doug Swan) was currently preoccupied with industrial issues.
- At Annual Conference, held at Hawkesbury Agricultural College:

- The DG said it was not the principal's role to manage industrial relations, but to be aware and sensitive to issues whilst remaining the educational leader. He said decentralisation would require a rethink on those professional responsibilities delegated to schools.
- John Ducker (NSW Public Service Board) spoke on 'Personnel Management and Industrial Relations', without supporting principal industrial relations training. He said that ambiguity was a fact of life for DoE officers and principals. He felt improved advice to staff on DoE requirements and better consultation could reduce the impact of a dispute, and any industrial relations matters should be referred to the DoE to manage.
- The Education Minister (Paul Landa) mentioned that whilst his own schooling was not a happy one, he made sure his decisions as Minister were not clouded by this. He gave a realistic appraisal of what contemporary education could offer as finances contracted and said that the Government priorities were to complete the primary class size reductions and improve Aboriginal education. He stated that all must acknowledge public expectations and concerns and that principals should attempt to involve parents, keep them informed on decision making and on how problems are handled. He also referred to the rezoning of schools, giving Armidale as a practical example.

Please see below for a summary of the 'Report to the Director-General on Principals Councils in NSW'.

Summary of the 'Report to the Director-General on Principals Councils in NSW' (May 1980) by the Review Committee chaired by Assistant Director-General George Conomy, comprising representatives of DoE Senior Management, the Primary Principals' Association and the Secondary Principals' Council.

- It recognised that the growth of, and differences between, Councils at all levels could be seen as showing independence and vitality, but they could also be seen as factors contributing to difficulties in operation or lack of coordination and problems with communication.
- The growth of Principals' Councils was a demonstration of professionalism in the teaching service, their contribution to planning and implementation of policies was increasingly significant and it has led to Principals forming professional relationships and assisting each other in solving common complex problems.
- The advantages of having Principals' Councils outweigh the disadvantages, and in a spirit of professionalism and goodwill they need to be recognised and encouraged to grow.
- The State Councils depend upon the effective operation of Regional Councils, which have their own peculiar logistical problems so no single structure can be prescribed state-wide. For success there should be a real sense of need and, equally, a sensitive, personal relationship between the Regional Directors and their Principals.
- Although a Regional Director may not agree with or support a Council's views, they must not be seen to suppress or repress opinions, particularly when the matters being considered are of state-wide importance and the Regional Council seeks to have its views made known to the Director-General. If this is achieved, Regional Councils would not need to seek direct contact with the Director-General but could communicate through the Regional Director and State Councils.
- One of the most effective means of utilising the educational experience of Principals at all levels in the Administration occurs when their opinions are sought. The inclusion of Principal representatives at the planning stage in educational development would do a great deal to ensure that the Principals' Councils and Administration work together effectively.
- Participatory decision making does help to ensure the formulation of policies that are clearly understood and accepted by those who have to implement them. The achievement of these purposes requires the support and cooperation of all Directors.
- Council meetings help develop group thinking on policies and procedures that affect the work of schools, and they also help communicate these ideas to appropriate Department officers.
- Communication must be two-way in nature. For that reason, resolutions have limitations as a consultative mechanism and on system matters, it would be preferable to express concerns, opinions or advice so the Officer who has the responsibility for making the decision is as well informed as possible.
- It is highly desirable that each Council have a constitution as that provides a clear framework of reference for the Council's executive and its members, and for administrators who work either directly or indirectly with it.
- The report ratified the release time and meeting schedules determined by the DG in 1976 for the Secondary Principals' Council and recommended the Primary Principals' Association adopt the same processes.

RECOMMENDATION: That in order to bring about the continuous improvement of secondary and primary education, the collective wisdom of Principals should be used as an educational resource to assist the Administration in the formulation of policy and plans, whether operating as a Regional or State Council, or by supplying representatives for Regional and State Committees.