



***Engineering Our Selves:
Is Education Producing People Who
Will Flourish in the Future?***

How identity is shaped through education and experiences of learning and how personal attributes play a key role in the contemporary workplace.



PM vows return to basics in schools

In a speech to the Centre for Independent Studies, Mr Howard (remarked):

“I’m an avowed education traditionalist. I believe in high academic standards, competitive examinations, teacher-directed lessons based on traditional disciplines, clear and readable curriculum material and strong but fair policies on school discipline,” Mr Howard said. “I believe English lessons should teach grammar. I believe history is History, not Society and the Environment or Time, Continuity and Change. I believe geography is Geography, not Place and Space.”

15 May 2007
The Australian

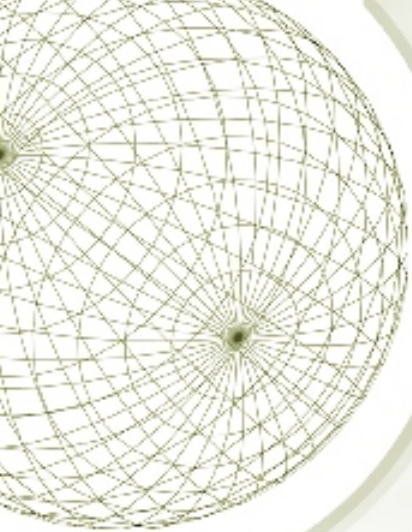


Diehard subjects return to schools

THE catch-all subject Studies of Society and Environment will be dropped in the nation's high schools and replaced by the traditional disciplines of history, geography and economics under a schools action plan to be released by the states and territories today.

"Studies of Society and Environment has been criticised by a number of commentators, partly because its focus is not clear from the label," the report says. "It has become increasingly clear that what should be studied under this label, are the disciplines of history, geography and economics."

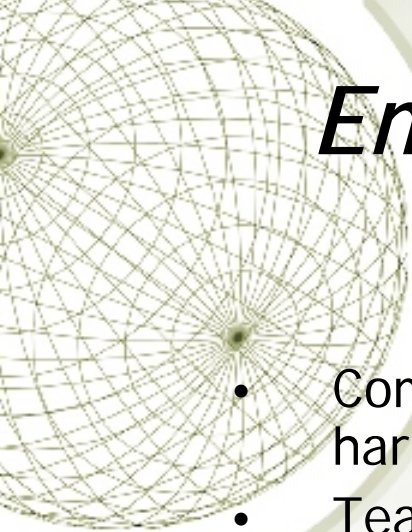
Victorian Premier Steve Bracks, who will release the report today, said the report advocated a return to traditional disciplines to ensure a well-rounded education.



Call for education to go back to basics

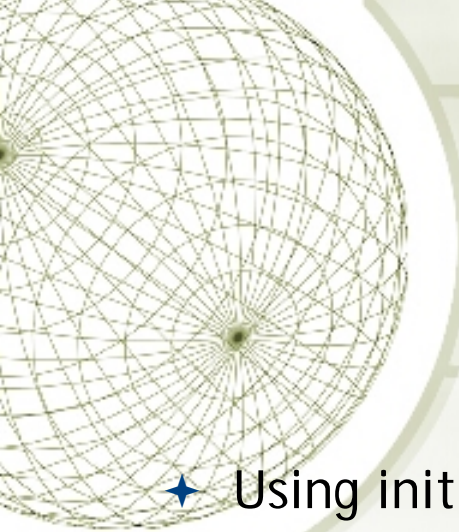
A more focused approach to the teaching of core subjects, such as English, mathematics and science will be recommended by the Council for the Australian Federation in a report to be launched today, on the grounds that studying traditional subjects in-depth better prepares students for multi-disciplinary studies.

24 April 2007
Australian Financial Review (Abstracts)



Employability Skills Framework (ACCI/DEST, 2002)

- Communication skills that contribute to productive and harmonious relations between employees and customers
- Team work skills that contribute to productive working relationships and outcomes
- Problem-solving skills that contribute to productive outcomes
- Initiative and enterprise skills that contribute to innovative outcomes
- Planning and organising skills that contribute to long-term and short-term strategic planning
- Self-management skills that contribute to employee satisfaction and growth
- Learning skills that contribute to ongoing improvement and expansion in employee and company operations and outcomes
- Technology skills that contribute to effective execution of tasks



Enterprising skills and attributes

- ★ Using initiative
- ★ Being creative and innovative
- ★ Being positive and flexible
- ★ Making decisions and problem solving
- ★ Planning and organising
- ★ Communicating and negotiating
- ★ Managing resources and people
- ★ Working cooperatively
- ★ Reviewing and assessing (reflection and debrief)
- ★ Personal development to be more adaptable



Definition and Selection of Key Competencies (OECD)

Interacting in socially heterogeneous groups

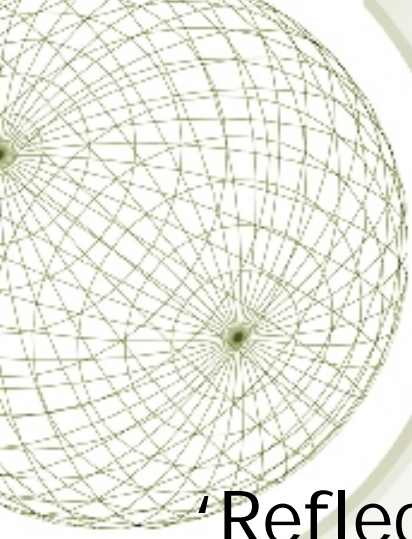
- ★ Relate well to others
- ★ Co-operate and work in teams
- ★ Manage and resolve conflicts

Acting autonomously

- ★ Act within the big picture or larger context
- ★ Form and conduct life plans and personal project
- ★ Defend and assert rights, interests, limits and needs

Using tools interactively

- ★ Language, symbols and texts
- ★ Knowledge and information
- ★ Technology



'Reflectivity - a critical stance and reflective practice - has been identified as the required competence level to meet the multifaceted demands of modern life in a responsible way.... an overall development of critical thinking and a reflective integrated practice based on formal and informal knowledge and experience of life.' Rychen and Salganick, 2003

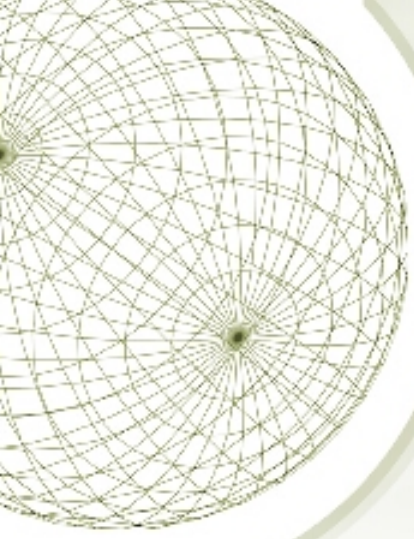


World class skills for world class industries: Employers' perspectives for skilling Australia (2006)

As part of an increasingly open world, Australia's future economic fortunes depend in part on our having access to, and making use of, the skills that will help our industries to be world class ...

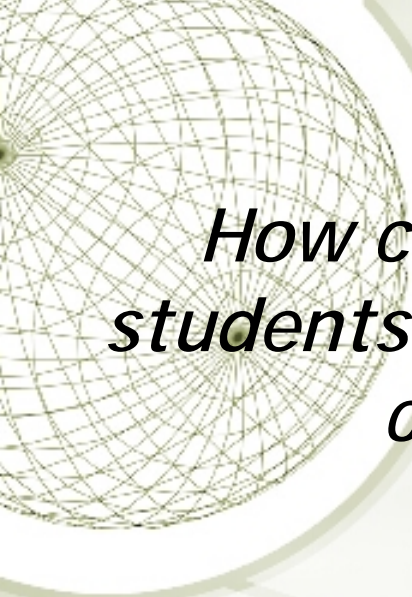
World class firms, which make up world class industries, are those that survive and prosper in an increasingly open global economy ...

The skills that Australian firms are looking for in their employees already reflect the demands of a highly competitive environment, the rapid pace of technological change and more discerning customers. They are demanding higher level of skills, frequent updating of skills and excellent 'soft' as well as technical skills. Over 90 per cent look for people who are flexible and adaptive, willing to learn on the job, team workers, technically competent and committed to excellence. All of these attributes will remain important to employers in coming years.



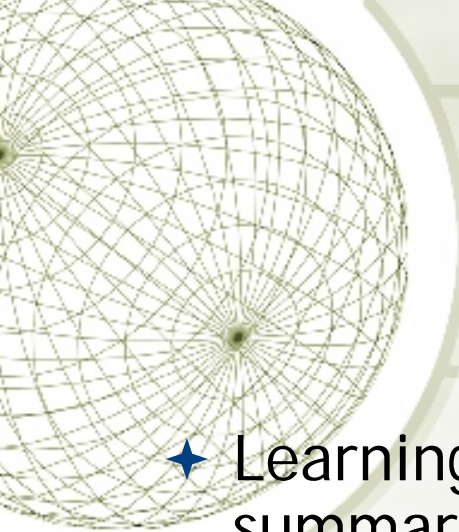
' ... the fundamental educational problem of a changing world is neither one of knowledge nor of skills but is one of *being*. To put it more formally, the educational challenge of a world of uncertainty is ontological in its nature'

(Barnett 2006, p. 51)



How can educators meet this challenge to equip students with the resources for self formation and change - or if you like, for engineering and re-engineering themselves?

1. Changes in teachers and the institutions in which they work
 - VET in schools
 - Higher education
2. Engagement with the workplace and “working knowledge”
3. Pedagogical strategies which encourage a reflexive engagement with the world



Formal learning skills

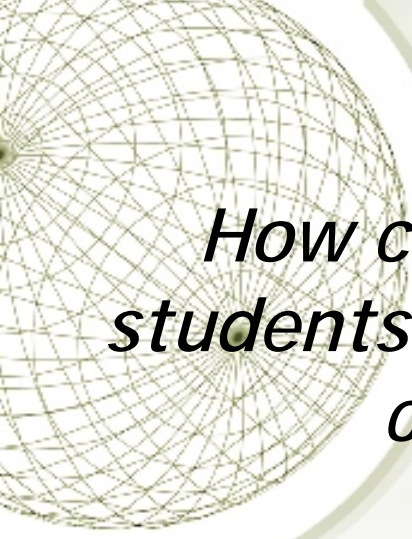
(see Smith 1990)

- ★ Learning from instruction (listening, taking notes, summarising, questioning)
- ★ Performing assigned learning tasks (understanding the purpose of a task, following instructions, anticipating the kinds of responses required)
- ★ Relating practical experiences to the material being taught and applying the principles derived from theory and research
- ★ Basic learning skills such as finding information, organising and categorising thoughts, reviewing material for examinations, exam technique
- ★ Learning how to generalise/when to generalise



Workplace learning skills

- ◆ How to analyse experiences
- ◆ The ability to learn from others
- ◆ The ability to act without all the facts available
- ◆ Choosing among multiple courses of action
- ◆ Learning about organisational culture
- ◆ Using a wide range of resources and activities as learning opportunities (eg memos, policies, decision-making processes)
- ◆ Understanding the competing and varied interests in the shaping of one's work or professional identity
- ◆ The identification and creation of opportunities for experiences eg volunteering or seeking out special projects or assignments in the workplace, being active in suggesting initiatives in which he or she may be involved, negotiating with supervisors for more varied tasks and responsibilities, or creating new ways of carrying out routine tasks.



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Ways of relating to oneself

- ★ Knowing oneself
- ★ Controlling oneself (self efficacy)
- ★ Caring for oneself
- ★ (Re)Creating oneself



Knowing oneself

- ★ Measuring practices (learning styles, aptitudes, self-directed readiness scales, personality dispositions, Myers-Briggs personality types, etc and the idea of the person as having measurable traits).
- ★ Introspective self reflective practices - often in groups, and involving sharing of ideas and stories, one version being the personal SWOT analysis (around personal qualities now valued such as empathy, good listener, independent but capable of working in a team, capacity to consult and make decisions, etc) surfacing beliefs and assumptions.



Controlling oneself (self efficacy)

This revolves around the notion of mastery and the exercise of authority over oneself: time management, documenting actions, setting work goals, the daily planner, the personal organiser, measuring outcomes, personal performance management, the rewriting and construction of one's curriculum vitae, the containment or alignment of one's expressed beliefs and values with the mission or vision of the organisation.



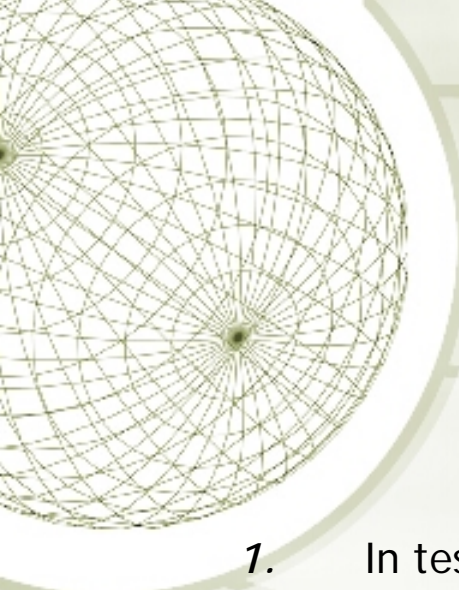
Caring for oneself (paying attention to oneself, watch yourself)

Confessional practices, cathartic experiences, stress management, regimes around physical fitness, diet, personal health and hygiene, exploration of relationships at home and in the workplace, empowerment (learning how to learn and manage the demands of work): these are all practices aimed at happiness, well being, self development. Practices such as writing letters to oneself, diary writing, the exploration of self image and values, the documentation of critical life events or incidents, journaling, life history exploration, exploration of own needs (emotional, intellectual, social and spiritual), identification of the conditions which facilitate growth (the creative person and the motivated person who has been lost and cleansing the doors of perception, etc).



(Re)Creating oneself

- ★ Confession (critical self disclosure) followed by renunciation and then the affirmation of a new identity.
- ★ Challenging and changing beliefs and assumptions (which may involve some kind of social critique)
- ★ Development of replacement narratives.



Academic and everyday problem solving (Sternberg, 1990)

1. In tests, problems are typically set and pre-defined whereas in everyday life problems need to be recognised and defined.
2. Most test problems are well structured and have a single correct answer whereas everyday problems are poorly structured and have alternative solutions.
3. In test problems all the information is typically available to solve the problem whereas in everyday life all the information is rarely available.
4. Problems on tests are typically decontextualised whereas everyday problems are contextualised.
5. The feedback from test problems is usually quite unambiguous whereas in everyday life the feedback obtained is often unclear and incomplete.
6. Test problems are usually solved alone whereas everyday problems are often solved in conjunction with others.