

The ACCE position statement on media enriched learning communities:

“If we’re not standing on the edge and thinking ahead we’re taking up too much room”

ABSTRACT

The ACCE position statement for creating media enriched learning communities targets all stakeholders in educational policy and practice who influence the future of learning, schools, and systems. Stakeholders include policy-makers in government, national and international organisations, professional networks and institutions, school leaders, teachers, and parents. The ACCE scenario proposed in this paper is a vision that challenges key stakeholders to rethink what is happening throughout educational systems. The scenario has major implications for educational bodies, advocating cultural change, where the student is responsible for their learning, and changes to building design, timetables, class structure and school organisation.



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INTRODUCTION

The 2006 Australian Computer Education Conference, hosted by the Australian Council for Computers in Education (ACCE), included a leadership forum to debate possible, probable and plausible futures for ICT enriched learning. Professional association leaders, principals, forward-thinking teachers, lecturers and researchers came together to set the direction for the next two years of professional work in practice and policy development. The Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) future schooling scenarios (OECD, 2004) provided the foundation for discussion on

- (a) what to teach, who to teach, how to teach and the role of technology;
- (b) the work of teachers and the role of networks;
- (c) student voice;
- (d) engagement and creativity; and
- (e) school design.

The forum was a first step in a professional conversation about learning and how ICT leaders view and create a future that enables valuable learning outcomes for all students.

The ACEC Leadership Forum provided a voice for all participants by valuing the experience and wisdom of all and focusing divergent perspectives through thought provoking presentations, discussion and reflection time. Participants were encouraged to initially deconstruct their views through describing ideas to colleagues, respond to others from a personal perspective and synthesise the discussion into key ideas to move forward. The writers then collated all the material from the day, continued the reflection process by identifying connections and relationships between ideas, explored and interrogated the multiple ideas and developed a reconstructed view of future

schooling. This strategy enabled rich conversations on possible policies, desirable concepts and future outcomes.

The ideas emerging from the ACEC Leadership Forum are presented in the form of a Position statement on future schooling. This Position Statement includes

- (a) learning trends and drivers of change on which the position statement is based;
- (b) a scenario, that is, an outcome-based snapshot of future schooling, and
- (c) recommendations on key policy action.

The ACCE Position Statement is not a prediction, vision or description of the school of the future, rather, a view of future schooling and key enablers. The term media is used in a broader sense to include all forms of digital communication as well as its common usage in relation to television, radio and newspapers.

The Position Statement supports and builds on Learning in an Online World Pedagogy Strategy (MCEETYA, 2005). Particular terms used in the Position Statement to describe the view of future schooling, are

- (a) media enriched learning communities as schools;
- (b) media enriched learning tools as information and communication technology (ICT); and
- (c) media enriched learning environments as learning spaces.

Learning trends

The status quo in many classrooms and subject areas has not changed for generations. For example in mathematics the numbers still add up, spelling is important in literacy. In geography, the continents haven't moved significantly and in history, Hillary is still the conqueror of Everest. For those teaching in ICT related subjects or integrating ICT across the curriculum, the basis of what we teach and what we use to teach has constantly changed. In many cases, use of the new technology is simply reinforcing outmoded approaches to learning. There is no other educational resource or subject that has had as many changes to its content or educational use during the last twenty five years, yet is often seen to be reinforcing outmoded approaches to learning (Resnik, 2002).

Educational change involves a consideration of challenges and trends. Contemporary challenges include

- (a) significant student disengagement and non completion;
- (b) significant under-performance in student achievement; and
- (c) significant under-investment in pedagogy and relationships.

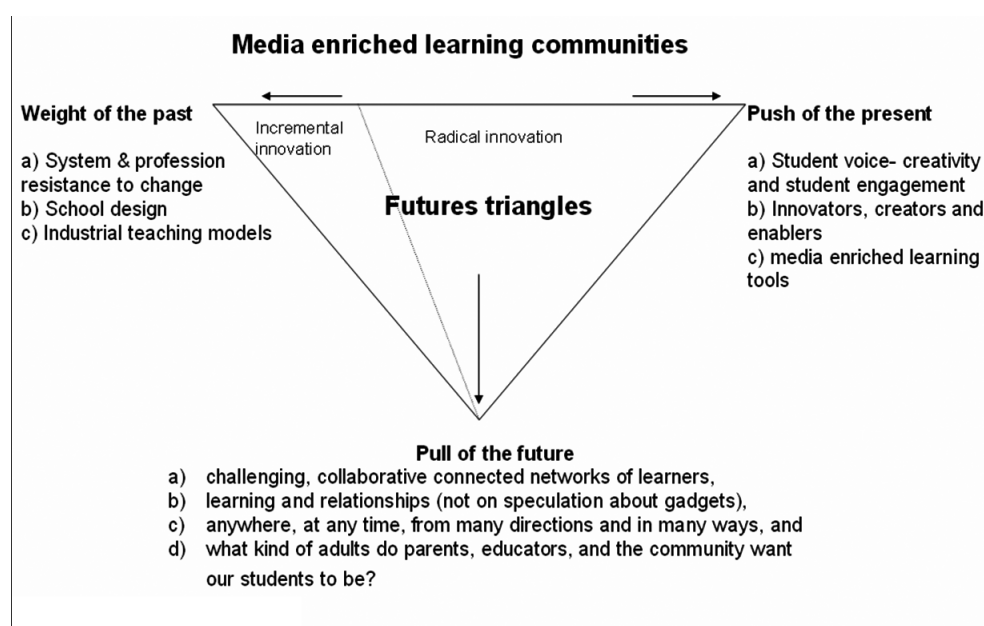
Trends which influence educational outcomes include the nature of childhood and extended adolescence, the knowledge economy, inequity and exclusion and changing family and community life (Lake, 2006).

In the future more of the same time and place-bound schooling will not provide valuable learning outcomes for students. Traditional schooling has run its course as students struggle to find relevance in industrial models of schooling where flexibility and personalised learning have no place. Incremental school reform is a strategy of the past and systems have failed in large scale improvement. SiMERR research recommends education authorities, schools, rural communities and other agencies develop strategies, allocate funds and provide resources to enable students to access local and online educational experiences. These include excursions, on-site visits, summer schools, interactions with other schools both nationally and internationally and develop activities to address the student learning needs, including those in composite classes (Lyons et al., 2006). The challenge is to take the best of the past, combine it with the innovations of the present, to construct a future that engages students in learning and community building.

The ideas presented in this paper are premised on a shared understanding that

- (a) effective media enriched learning involves challenging, collaborative connected networks of learners;
- (b) future schooling is about learning and relationships, not on speculation about gadgets;
- (c) learning needs to be able to take place anywhere, at any time, from many directions and in many ways; and
- (d) learning design should be driven by the question, what kind of adults do parents, educators, and the community want our students to be?

Figure 1: Media enriched learning communities



The weight of the past, the push of the present and the pull of the future, as illustrated in Figure 1, combine to create a position on future schooling that is seeded by current images and drivers yet calls for radical innovation (Inayatullah, 2005; OECD, 2006).

Adapted from "The futures triangle," by S. Inayatullah, 2006, *Futures*, Volume 38, Issue 6, p. 660.

Scenario building

Tools for creating future schooling are scenarios that describe possible, probable and plausible futures for transforming learning and teaching through ICT. Scenarios help build a boundary around uncertainty through considering possibilities by connecting and linking the ideas of stakeholders (Newby, 2005). Scenarios are developed through an analysis of long term and wide ranging trends which impact on society, as distinct from short term fashion trends. Strategic aims, long term processes of change and multiple sets of variables are brought together in scenario development. The process of developing scenarios is learning in itself and a valuable means of reflecting on educational policies and supporting discussions on future pathways (OECD, 2001).

The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) scenarios were developed as a starting point for discussion on possible alternatives for schooling to 2020 by the global education community. The aim was to develop approaches for overcoming the perceived preoccupation with short term decision making in education. They combined trends, inter-relationships between clusters of variables and guiding policy ideas in a set of predictions and visions. They are organised into three pathways titled;

- maintenance of the status quo;
- re-schooling possibilities for a changed social agenda; and
- de-schooling with an emphasis on individuality.

The scenarios sharpened understanding on how schooling might develop in years to come and how policy shapes these futures through considering possible, probable and plausible alternatives. A team of researchers refined the scenarios to better reflect the role of ICT (OECD, 2001). Since that time numerous organisations have used to scenarios as tools for policy making or learning in their communities. Although the idea of the ACCE scenario originates from this work, a different way of thinking about the future has emerged from the ACEC leadership forum. The ACCE scenario and descriptors of key elements are documented in the following paragraphs.

The ACCE scenario on future media enriched learning communities

Students are creators of knowledge and wisdom, with a voice in the learning process based on the belief that education and freedom are synonymous. Schooling occurs formally and informally through physical and virtual media enriched learning communities. Media enriched learning tools enable learning design and specialisation based on shared understandings

between students, teachers and parents. Teachers' practice is connected through virtual-classrooms that draw purposefully and effectively on contemporary and emerging media enriched technologies and environments. These enable access to real life learning opportunities with original and secondary sources such as news services, authors, scientists, artists, doctors, colleagues and the community. Curriculum design within media enriched learning communities involves flexibility, usability, rigor, accessibility, and scalability. Learners are exposed to and engaged with environments that are secure, encourage innovation and allow guided construction of knowledge.

The following descriptors are key elements of effective and purposeful media enriched learning communities.

1. Student voice

As agents of their own learning, students

- build 'portfolio learning careers' by setting their own journeys using a range of media, modes, time and place variables.
- drive learning through challenges, entertainment, fun, play and helping others.
- are no longer being passive consumers of educational qualifications.
- contribute to community goals through learning projects, problem solving and advocacy.

As producers of knowledge, students

- create and publish knowledge, no longer just consumers of knowledge.
- bring their own media enriched learning tools into communities, learning anytime and anywhere.
- participate in meaningful discussions with architects and designers of learning spaces.

As informed learners, students

- understand assessment, pathways and access to community resources.
- are given more flexibility in learning tasks and assessment and pursue their own learning based on richly designed tasks that encourage unique and untried paths.
- are accountable for designing their own learning plan with the teacher as the coach or facilitator.
- learn across media enriched learning communities rather than from one school, with distance learning becoming more commonplace.
- learn how to research and understand the role and rational of assessment.
- access the organisations with which they are involved via portal-based learning interfaces in media enriched learning communities.

Are we taking up too much room?

2. The role of technology

As an enabler of learning in media enriched learning communities, technology

- is a catalyst for reform in teaching and learning.
- enables students to have equitable access to relevant and inclusive material regardless of time and place.
- reduces professional isolation and makes addressing professional goals (such as assessment changes) easier.
- increases the power and interactions which leads to social networking.
- is robust, has large bandwidth, includes wireless connectivity, uses multiple forms of media to enrich learning and can be delivered in a fair and equitable way.
- is a tool to improve student outcomes, is introduced seamlessly and is used flexibly and purposefully for life-long learning.
- is effectively and purposefully brought together in virtual learning spaces.
- supports educators and students in flexible and useful ways.

3. The connected teacher

As agents of change, connected teachers

- view classes as 'the students I am working with today'.
- use a holistic approach to address the different needs, styles and multiple intelligences of individuals.
- utilize emerging media enriched learning tools to ensure the learning design is personalised for students.
- create virtual and physical learning spaces to meet the learning needs of students.
- democratise learning and create a community of learners that extends far beyond the bounds of the media enriched learning community.
- use progressive schooling models and emerging media enriched learning tools.
- work in teams using a range of professionals and media enriched learning tools to facilitate student management, learning, assessment and reporting and to assist colleagues transform teaching practice.
- mindsets allow for new models of teaching practice and reflect the times in which students learn.
- are able to adapt and transform practices as needed.
- use a holistic approach to address the different needs, styles and multiple intelligences of individuals.
- no longer judge student capacity based on their own knowledge and skills.
- not fear the unknown and call on a range of experts to assist students in their learning.

As professionals, connected teachers

- are reflective, creative and innovative professionals.
- have high expectations of students, as students have of each other and of the teacher.
- understand the student's world and the potential of media enriched learning communities to enable high quality outcomes for all students.
- ensure they can work within the new media enriched learning environments and maximise student learning potential.
- are supported by employers to further their learning and meet their individual needs in a supportive environment.
- demonstrate their understanding of what motivates students and how they learn through peer and mentor tutoring.
- have a key role in the leadership of schools.
- are held in high regard with adequate funding to support team collaboration and professional work groups.
- nurture higher order thinking skills, challenging and creative problem solving, and build positive relationships with students, fellow teachers and community members.

As facilitators of learning, connected teachers

- select emerging media enriched learning and thinking tools that engage youth culture, such as curiosity curriculums and rich tasks that are personally relevant and meaningful for students.
- are active participants in media enriched learning spaces where students can come and go.
- work with a broad range of professionals to support students and assist them develop balanced and purposeful opinions that contribute positively to the community.
- create a culture of trust with students, in collaboration with parents.

4. Learning spaces and curriculum design

As social places, media enriched learning communities

- are physical and virtual social institutions where media enriched learning tools are ubiquitous across the learning space.
- are happy, safe and comfortable, with fewer desks, softer furnishing and colourful surrounds.
- are deinstitutionalised with less restrictive infrastructure and more community access, located in a broader range of contexts, such as community centres and shopping malls
- are diverse, flexible and high quality places in which people feel comfortable.
- are producers of educational choices that meet the life needs of students.

As personal learning spaces/places, media enriched learning environments are

- shared multi purpose places, relevant to students' needs with space for movement and recreation available.
- connected to the global networks and creating a hub of connectivity.
- inclusive of demand-driven learning activities that challenge and support students to collaborate, develop creative ideas, and problem-solve.
- accessible from anywhere, at any time.
- places for personalising learning programs.
- intergenerational, life-long learning centres that incorporate community services.
- places for physical, virtual and online student teams to work on powerful collaborative and cooperative learning experiences.

As a guide post for learning, media enriched curriculum is valued as

- a broad range of formal and informal learning experiences not always explicitly tied to assessment.
- pathways to further study and careers direct from schools based on a holistic view of student capabilities
- flexible, integrated strategies for planning, teaching assessment and reporting.
- enhanced through mobile electronic progress records.

As key enablers of learning, media enriched learning communities are

- adequately funded with recognition for committed professionals.
- supported by all levels of government through adequate funding and useful accountability frameworks.
- fostered by leaders in schools through supporting teachers in their work.
- supported by effective teacher education courses that meet the needs of students through fostering high levels of pedagogical expertise, content knowledge and capabilities to design and facilitate flexible learning experiences.
- enable the tertiary sector and employers to take a greater role in selecting course and employment candidates based on their own criteria and screening.

As valued places, media enriched learning communities

- have a shared vision of what learning is and needs to be in the years ahead.
- celebrate innovative practices and support students in achieving high quality learning outcomes.

- encourage conformity and non-conformity equally as learning experience of failure, confusion and risk.

- will improve both culture and society.

Recommendations

Federal and state governments and employers

1. Work collaboratively and productively to foster an education environment that supports radical innovation and risk-taking as drivers for achieving sustainable high learning outcomes for students through:
 - a. Investing in new learning ideas by rethinking of teacher preparation and continuing professional development, rewarding entrepreneurial behaviour, increasing investment in research and development, and leveraging private – public partnerships in education.
 - b. Developing a robust information network by encouraging collaboration between systems, research institutions, education centres and government, and by catalysing the formation of clusters and international links.
 - c. Removing the constraining curriculum and school organisational logistics, for example time-based syllabus requirements.
 - d. Removing age progressions through schooling and encouraging success through supplementary classes.

Australian educators work in an environment where incremental innovation is the norm rather than the exception. Adding on, tacking on or 'band-aiding' technology to existing processes is a compliance model of thinking. Wiping the slate clean and starting again in some schools is a viable option to overcome the band-aid approach to resourcing learning. Radical innovation is needed to develop new ideas, products, processes and ways of educating to suit contemporary students. Radical innovation is critically dependent on strategic leadership, incentives to explore new options, knowledge-intensive activities and a strong resource and skills base.

Focus areas for national innovation:

- a. National infrastructure programs to support learning.
- b. Flexible curriculum frameworks.
- c. Investment in state and non-state education directed to creating media enriched learning environments.
- d. Time and age-grade boundaries for learning.

- e. Barriers to private funding of state schools and vice versa.
 - f. Barriers to schools becoming learning centers for the community.
 - g. Barriers to students sourcing teachers from interstate or overseas schools.
 - h. Use of media enriched learning tools as a professional obligation and requirement of teacher registration.
2. Enable the growth of a teaching workforce that matches the needs of contemporary students by;
- a. supporting attraction and retention strategies for professional teachers who are committed to meeting the challenge of the 21st century through ongoing personal learning, embracing changing pedagogies and technologies and committing to work in a variety of learning teams and environments.
 - b. negotiating conditions based on reasonable work loads which include specialised work roles that enable teachers to focus on core responsibilities whether they be pastoral care, curriculum or other specialist responsibilities.
 - c. negotiating salaries and conditions that value relevant additional formal qualifications and informally developed professional skills and knowledge.
 - d. mandating minimal core content and maximum curriculum personalization to facilitate varied career choices and study options for students.
 - e. communicating the notion that high quality education is a shared responsibility between government, schools, the community, the family and the student.
 - f. supporting teachers and teacher educators to work seamlessly across schools and higher education institutions.
 - g. supporting innovative funding models to remove the one teacher, one class, one subject model of practice.

Teachers and teacher educators

1. Embrace the challenge of teaching in new times.
2. Make the transition from competent practitioner to a professional educator who engages in continuing professional learning and sharing of practices with colleagues.

Professional associations

1. Support educators in their work in engaging students in learning and thinking beyond preparation for the workforce.
2. Create learning links for colleagues to emerging technologies.
3. Share innovations and learning passions with all colleagues, including the technophobes!
4. Develop a charter for 21st century teachers and teacher educators in collaboration with colleagues.
5. Conduct forums to debate future schooling ideas.

Communities and families

1. View education as ticket to a valued future and a framework for community building.
2. Support the work of educators in mind, and action.
3. Get involved in the learning of students.

CONCLUSION

Creating the future is about adopting a mindset, then a passion and then a plan, rather than choosing a path offered by the present. Communicating the vision will change our professional community and where we are going, and in the process we can continue to refine our thinking. We have the opportunity to renew the commitment to transform learning spaces through ICT and make a significant difference to student learning outcomes, curriculum and school reform. This position statement is a beginning rather than an ending and as the conversation evolves we will take communities, regions, and systems with us to a better educational landscape.

BIOGRAPHY

DEBBIE KEMBER has a long history of involvement with the Queensland Society for Information Technology in Education having served as President from 2001-2004 and as a Board member of the Australian Council for Computers in Education. Since that time she served as President of the Joint Council of Queensland Teachers' Associations, Vice-President the Australian Joint Council of Professional Teaching Associations and interim Board member of the National Institute for Quality Teaching and School Leadership (now Teaching Australia).

TONY BRANDENBURG is president of ICT in Education Victoria and on the Board of Australian Council for Computers in Education. He has been involved in technology in education for the past twenty five years. He has published previously in similar contexts to this paper. His work in Australia, and especially in Victoria, has focused on strategic planning for schools, with a focus on creative and innovative options for future education.

ANGELA MURPHY works as a free-lance and commissioned creative and academic writer for newspapers, and magazines. She has won awards for her stories, had a full length play professionally produced and conducted regional writing workshops. She was the script writer for the 2006 ACEC keynote address and scribe for the leadership forum.

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Forum master of ceremonies: Tony Brandenburg
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Program

1. **The need for priorities of rural and urban ICT teachers** – Dr Terry Lyons, lecturer in Science Education at University of New England.
2. **Introduction and Futures Overview** – Mr Ron Lake, Regional Director, Loddon, Mallee Region, Victoria.
3. **What to teach, who to teach, how to teach and the role of technology** Keynote - Mr Dean Sedgman, Director of School Technologies, Education Queensland Roundtable discussions facilitated by Julie Baker
4. **The teacher - no longer alone in the classroom** - teacher teams using the network Keynote - Ms Lindy McKeown, Education Consultant. Roundtable discussions facilitated by Julie Baker
5. **Student voice: Creativity and student engagement** Keynote - Mr Jim Ballard, Vice President Oracle Education Foundation, Texas, USA. Roundtable discussions facilitated by Julie Baker
6. **School design** Keynote - Dr Geoff Romeo, Associate Dean, Teaching, Monash University, Melbourne. Roundtable discussions facilitated by Julie Baker

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Deborah Kember – Past President, QSITE

Resources

Further information on pre-readings and presentations at the ACEC Leadership Forum are available at <http://www.acec2006.info/item.asp?pid=7463>

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