Hi everyone,

In this first issue for the year, I would like to inform members of computer education groups about ACCE activities and agendas for 2001. Some ACCE activities are aimed at supporting you personally, and others represent your interests in a national context, seeking to inform and influence state and national groups. ACCE also undertake contracts with DETYA to support learning technology initiatives and proactively initiates projects where gaps are obvious.

RESEARCH INTO PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT MODELS FOR SYSTEMS

One project ACCE is managing with the Australian Curriculum Studies Association and the University of Western Sydney, investigates how educational systems design, implement and evaluate professional development about using Information and Communications Technology in curriculum. The audience for this research includes state and non-state systems of education and the Commonwealth, rather than individual schools. The project synthesised the results of research about professional development models nationally and internationally and used a collection of data retrieved from Australian systems about the professional development models used to achieve systemic goals. The synthesis will interest individual teachers and members of CEGs whose responsibility includes planning professional development in schools, in professional communities or within clusters or systems. ACCE will report this research in an issue of Australian Education Computing as soon as we can, but the following broad observations may be useful.

The research by ACCE said that any systemic professional development strategy to help schools adopt learning technology must have a number of essential components:

- Professional development is an attitude, not a set of events. Professional development can not be designed; professional commitment must be nurtured and teachers need to take responsibility for their own professional growth.
- That content of professional development was probably more important than the model for delivering that content. This was framed as a need to redevelop the content of curriculum, as well as changing how students engage with it, and then to run professional development which helps teachers engage in the new curriculum content in new ways.
- That understanding why technology is in schools is essential. Systems, schools and individuals were not good at articulating these rationales. A rationale that draws the many arguments for having computers in schools comes from the knowledge economy context. Many disconnected and computer-illiterate teachers do not appreciate the link between learning processes, knowledge work processes and use of ICT. The report presents the view that learners are apprentice knowledge workers.

In terms of professional development strategies that systems might adopt, the report recommends that:

- A mix of activities over a long period of time that helps support the development of teacher professionalism is the most likely successful model; that there is an optimal mix for long term professional development strategies.
• That development of professional community is effective and that some teachers need to learn how to contribute to and draw from professional community; professional engagement is an attitude.

• That face-to-face is an important component of any professional development strategy for a large range of reasons.

• That teachers learn more from participating in quality curriculum projects while surrounded by a supportive community of peers than to participate in professional development about curriculum ideas and then be expected to duplicate them, on their own; the action research process projected into connected communities of practice.

• That professional development should model life processes that teachers are helping children practice, thus defining good teaching in a modern context – constructivist approaches, individualised learning, quality experiences which extend the individual and the group, communities of practice and knowledge work processes.

• Professional development which encourages isolationist or anonymous professional development is so alien from how modern professionals work, that it is counterproductive for systems to pursue them, so the trend to professional development by cd or professional development by the web is perhaps counterproductive.

As you can see, this report will confirm what some systems are doing and will perturb others. It will also be supportive of much of the grass-roots practice in the country and confirm the continuing and unrelentless approaches of computer education groups, especially in building professional communities of practice. This report is now to be used to develop a portal about professional development nationally and to develop a community of practice amongst those of us who develop and implement professional development about the use of ICT in schools. (Note that the "T" terminology I have used here, reflects that used by the Commonwealth.).

THE QUALITY TEACHER PROGRAM

ACCE has also led a consortium of professional associations in winning a large tender to monitor the Quality Teaching Program (QTP) and construct a learning community of people involved in that project over the next few years. This will be challenging. The role of professional associations has been diminished in most states, in contrast to the intention of the Commonwealth and you can be assured some gentle reminders will be forthcoming. One of the target areas for QTP is professional development of teachers to assist them to use ICT in curriculum. This project thus enables ACCE to draw together professional development initiatives at the national level. We can report more on this as the year unfolds.

NATIONAL LEARNING TECHNOLOGY COMPETENCIES FOR TEACHERS

Yes, it seems that, at least at a national level, the reaction to the Australian Educational Computing special issue of Learning technology Competencies for teachers had the effect of drawing attention to the lack of coordination across states and that the issue is complex and problematic to different degrees in different states. ACCE recently wrote an invited tender for DETYA to investigate the issues in more depth and develop some national positions. The results of that tender were not available at the time of printing. This project will impact on every educator in the country without a doubt and ACCE will represent the variety of opinions about this and draw on feedback from you to your CEG in the process. Please contribute to debates locally and nationally.

THE NEXT ISSUE FOR ACCE

ACCE initiates development of national positions on issues as a response to the intense debates in CEGs and if ACCE believes the debates will be heard. Timeliness on national agendas is important. This issue of Australian Education Computing is a forerunner to the next national position paper ACCE will address. Computing studies, titles in different ways in different states, is a national issue in the context of smart state initiatives in all states and in the context of knowledge economy and information economy directions from the Commonwealth. The time is right to raise the agenda of the absolute lack of attention by systems about computing studies as a discipline in secondary schools. In the lead article to this issue of the journal, the disparity between state and commonwealth rhetoric is examined. This is followed by descriptions of activities in some states, so you can begin to develop your position.

The Board of ACCE discussed for some time whether it was appropriate for the national body, whose principle charter is about integrating the use of information technology in education, to focus on the issues of a specialist group of members. All the arguments were presented and ACCE was swayed by two main things: that we have addressed issues for all members through many projects recently, especially learning technology competencies, professional development about the use of ICT in education and now the QTP project; and that no other professional association or group in the country was equipped to address the computer studies issues. You will hear much about this in the next issue, in online forums and at conferences this year.

PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATE STATUS

Personal members of their computer education group are automatically granted ACCE Affiliate status, and can use "ACCE Affiliate" in their professional signature. Some CEGs’ members contribute much more to their professional community. These people can apply for Professional Affiliate Status and use the signature "ACCE Professional Affiliate" in their professional signature. Please use the ACCE web site to apply for professional affiliate status today. http://www.acce.edu.au

IN CLOSING

I would like to thank the folks who contributed to this issue of the Journal. Computer Studies is an important curriculum in this country and needs to be addressed systemically in more proactive ways. Thanks as usual to the Journal team from ECAWA who ensure that your national journal is a high quality and significant national educational resource.

Regards
Michelle Williams.