President's Column

Hi everyone,

This year, ACCE in collaboration with CEGs, will undertake a project to develop a framework for defining professional competencies for Senior Secondary Computing Studies teachers. Computing Studies teachers are a large community of CEG membership. I want to use this column to explain why ACCE has undertaken a project which focuses on a sector of our membership this time, and explore what this project will mean.

Why focus on computing studies teachers?

The membership of CEGs includes learning technology leaders in schools, teachers using learning technology in schools, teachers of various subjects under an umbrella referred to here as Computing Studies, educators in the various training organisations and universities and educators in systems and related industries. Computing facilities managers in schools are also a membership group. ACCE is made up of a range of diverse groups who share common goals and issues, but who also passionate about their specialist needs and issues. Computing studies teachers deserve attention on ACCE's agenda along with all other groups. It is simply, their turn.

ACCE along with the ACS, is the most likely and capable group to advocate for the Computing Studies curriculum area at national level, and in doing so, influence states to address issues which impact on students of IT subjects and their teachers. This group of specialist teachers have not been in the hearts and minds of systems or Boards of Studies and professional development for this group of teachers does not seem to be within the responsibility of anyone's framework of operation. This needs to be changed. ACCE is in a strategic position to change this.

Computing Studies has not been "on the agenda" at national and state level, because of the attention given to integration of learning technology into all curriculum areas and the ICT Competencies for teachers agendas around the country. ACCE published a discussion paper and a rationale for addressing Computing Studies in schools in Australian Educational Computing in 2001. Williams 2001). This article indicated that professional development for this sector of our membership was a high priority if clever country, smart-state profiles were to be realised. Work has begun to put right the balance, but more focused activity is now needed.

The terminology

The project will need to navigate the quagmire of terminology and meaning, if it is to clearly communicate intent. Who ACCE is working with, provides the most useful distinction. ACCE will be working at first, with teachers of those high-level computing subjects in senior secondary schools, which have a tertiary entrance component. These subjects usually include subject matter from computing science, information science, programming and high-level multimedia and web development. The project may extend to teachers who also teach VET components in IT and perhaps teachers who work with programs of computing studies in early secondary years. Senior secondary computing studies seems to be an acceptable term which at least identifies the target group.

The terminology of any professional competencies or professional standards
project in also problematic. It will be a task in this project to determine what terminology is most valuable and to identify terminology from similar standards projects which have also needed to navigate the terminology traps.

The project

In this project, ACCE will develop a framework for defining professional competencies for Senior Secondary Computing Studies teachers. The process and project design used in the "Developing a Framework for ICT Competencies for Teachers" project, in which ACCE and others, were engaged by DEST, will form the basis for this project design. Thus, this project will involve;

- A literature review to determine if any national or international standards have been developed for IT teachers. The Framework for ICT Competencies for Teachers project has provided much of the required data.

- A data collection exercise will map out the Senior Secondary Computer Studies subjects in states and territories and identify the stakeholders in this project.

- A preliminary investigation will result in an issues paper, presented and debated at ACEC 2002 at Hobart.

- Focus group sessions which provide sufficient data to develop a draft framework. It is likely the model accepted by DEST for the Framework for ICT Competencies for Teachers will be used.

- Development and distribution of a framework.

Be involved

It is important that Senior Secondary Computer Studies teachers actively participate in this project and ensure that it meets practical needs. There are multiple opportunities to have influence on the content and shape of the framework. Each CEG will be conducting activities, seeking data and issuing draft statements for comment. There will be a session dedicated to gathering ideas and opinion at ACEC 2002. I also invite you to contact me directly to share your ideas and concerns and to volunteer to be a part of our project team. It is easy to participate.

What will the project mean?

This project will draw attention to the contribution Senior Secondary Computing Studies makes to the future of the nation and each state. It will also draw attention to the issues surrounding the subject area in schools and will provide a framework for improving the status of Computing Studies teachers. A standards framework will provide a basis for ongoing and consistent professional development opportunities for IT teachers and ensure they are not omitted from professional development initiatives of systems. It will set the standard for professional knowledge required to teach these high level specialist subjects and discourage schools from appointing teachers who have not the knowledge and qualifications to help students achieve in the subject. It will also provide ACS and other industry groups a basis on which to recognise the professional level of Computing Studies teachers. For ACCE and CEGs, this project will provide a valuable service to this specialist membership group. Other matters

ACCE hosts conferences every two years and in 2002, we will all meet in Hobart to celebrate the professional growth of all sectors of our membership. The conference brings together researchers, practitioners, project managers and students. Make it your conference. I would like to extend my early congratulations to Jan Butler, Andrew Fluck and the Conference Team in TASITE who have undertaken the responsibility for this conference.
Your effort is appreciated and we hope now to settle back and enjoy the benefits of your efforts.

I also want to extend my thanks to the volunteer members of all CEG management teams who have volunteered to support the CEG movement this year. You deserve recognition each year for your work and certainly the ACCE Board, made up of some of your members, is aware of the value of the contribution. I offer my personal thanks too.

I do wish all CEG members well for 2002. I encourage you, this year, to do two things in celebration of your leadership in this area. Firstly, please share your expertise with your peers and draw them into the CEG support structures. The strength of this network depends on the quality of its members and the willingness to learn from each other. Within this philosophy, there is considerable opportunity for you to take a leadership position in caring for the professional growth of our whole network. Offer a workshop. Mentor a colleague. Undertake a project and write about it. Talk at a conference and always, bring along a colleague. Strengthen your CEG, so it works better for you and others.

Secondly, invent the future of computer education/learning technology activities in schools. What are we doing that is worth developing? What is new that we need to do? How can we reshape curriculum, learning and teaching so it more directly addresses the new contexts which surround schools? How can we practically move forward to achieve our mission? Create debate and discussion in your school and in your CEG, about the next generation of activity and drive it. Your CEG, under your leadership will be valued, because of your assertiveness and inventiveness.

Good luck for 2002 and I hope you enjoy a professionally rewarding year within the balances which make our lives enjoyable.

Regards,

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Reference