Teacher Learning and leadership for the 21st century: A view from the classroom

John Turner

Dr John Turner is Head of Information Technology and VCE Administration at Presbyterian Ladies' College in Melbourne.

Introduction

While there is general support for the need for ‘school improvement’, discussion has been focused overwhelmingly on what needs to be done about teachers rather than with teachers. When we look more closely at this, educational research can be found to support most viewpoints. For a variety of reasons teaching has become bogged down with claim, counterclaim and ‘if only’ thinking, which has a range of negative effects, particularly on teachers.

Earl (2004) calls for educators to ‘get over’ responses based on demoralisation and feeling threatened to engage in their own destiny. In support of that suggestion, this paper presents one teacher’s view, of one way forward, for those who value education as a ‘people activity’. Its specific purpose is to raise the issue of teacher learning as a crucial element of school education that requires rethinking and re-evaluation. An argument is made for increased emphasis on engagement, in the hope that more teachers will take up leadership opportunities – a process that is necessary for a stressed education system to be revitalised. Professional development will play one role in that process, but the professional development will need to be quite different from what we now experience.

An end to professional development, or a new beginning?

In education, it is time for professional development, as currently practised in schools, to be consigned to the dustbin of history. It is an out-of-date model,
reflecting factory-era dogma that one model can fit all. It is moribund, having ‘remained largely unchanged for the past quarter century’ (Cumming, 2000). There is a mismatch here, since we live in new times that are characterised by increased rates of change and complex interlocking relationships and challenges. To realise the potential of education, and our developing role as educators, we need not only to retain responsibility for discipline depth, but also build our capacity to cater for individuality, creativity and diversity in a context of fast-changing social dynamics.

Ours is a people business. Professional Development (PD) needs to reflect that. It should be reconceptualised as Professional Learning. Professional learning should not be about what is done to people, but should be about what people are willing to do, and can do, themselves.

Current practice and the structures that underpin it are framed in ways that do not encourage such an approach. School structures generally are still based on bureaucratic industrial structures and educational theories of static knowledge transmission and regurgitation, dating from the 19th century. This impacts on the realisation of potential in our schools – our core institutions for learning – affecting students and teachers. New approaches need to be explored, including a real commitment to Teacher Learning.

This is by no means a new conclusion. In 1998, Hargreaves commented that within school, the dominant models for teacher professional development are inappropriate, ineffective, a waste of resources and leading to low teacher morale. They tend to be bureaucratically controlled, and industrially structured. By contrast, new approaches to Teacher Learning should be built on the understanding and development of three ‘R’s. These are

- **Relationships**
  - relationship to learning
  - relationship to subject
  - relationship to students
  - the cultural and community relationships that define any school.

- **Respect**, implying increased respect for teachers as education professionals, who have much to offer for effective change management.

- **Risk taking**, which involves recognising the importance of positive learning environments, where we can take the risks that are necessary to achieve improved outcomes.

**The problems we face in improving schools as learning environments**

We talk (and talk) about the shortcomings of school but nothing much seems to change. A few years ago, Cuban (1988) pointed to a century of rhetoric about school reform with little sustained change to its basics. His point remains valid. Why is this so?

1. The factory model, also referred to as ‘production line schooling’ (Beare, 2001), has proved to be an economically efficient approach while maintaining, at least superficially, social viability. Children are kept off the streets and provided with an education, which, it can be argued, is consistently applied. Economic growth on the back of educational sifting systems has been significant and constant.

2. The range of stakeholders, from parents to teachers to politicians to the educational bureaucracy; all wield enough power to negate any impetus for significant change. The system has become strongly self-serving, with ingrained defensiveness against the multitudinous economic, cultural, political and social demands placed on it.

3. The contemporary political will is directed at economically modelled approaches that seek to increase outputs. This can be most easily (and cost efficiently) controlled and implemented through standardised testing of learning that is segmented and in ‘chunks’.

4. There is a paradox in schooling that limits the capacity of schools to change. As Holden (2002) testifies, the challenges confronting schools have increased, teacher capabilities have increased, but ‘responsibility and authority accorded them has not changed in decades’. Often, while there may be an allocation of ‘responsibility’, this comes without the ‘authority’ or ‘powers’ to make things happen. As an example, the decentralising of responsibility for decision making has gone hand-in-hand with
increased levels of external accountability. Responses to this kind of imposed and complex change, from tired educationalists, have tended to be somewhat dispirited. This, in turn, adds fuel to political and bureaucratic pressures. The result, at the most local level, is that teachers take up defensive positions within their classrooms.

Media and community reactions have been affected by perceptions of what Kemmis (1990) described in terms of social confrontation and debilitating debates between radical, bureaucratic and traditional views. We need to work to change such negative perceptions by addressing the underlying issues. By doing so, we will help to reduce some of the pressures on schools and schooling.

Again, the fact that school is a system under stress is nothing new. John Dewey was advocating the need for systemic change, to cope with the deficiencies of what he characterised as fixed, irrelevant curriculum, over a hundred years ago. In the mid-1960s, other leading educationalists, such as McLuhan and Leonard (1967) attacked mass education as beholden to a ‘mechanistic age’ that had passed. Forty years later, in the 21st century, we are faced with multiple changes that emphasise the ongoing need to reconsider and alter the way we operate. Examples include

- the crowded curriculum;
- increasing rates-of-change in information growth;
- increased accountability and social demands;
- globalisation-based calls for innovation;
- diversity and new structures relating to knowledge generation and management.

All of these cry out for approaches that the factory-school is ill-equipped to handle. Changes since the mid-1960s to ‘improve education’ have resulted in bureaucratic bodies that started as support but, over time, subsumed increasing control (Dow, 1982). Teacher Institutes might be seen as a more recent manifestation of this trend.

Compounding this situation, teachers have increasingly been left out of meaningful discussions and decisions. Such lack of inclusion decreases ownership of change and courts disengagement.

**School system change**

What is new is an increased sense of urgency. Factors such as teacher shortages worldwide, globalisation and increased international competitiveness, increased interest in student individuality, the need for formal lifelong learning, and an understanding of the social impact of school ‘failure’, have all led to increased pressures on schools to ‘improve’.

The demands on teachers have changed, and with this the role expected of them (National Research Council, 2000). Even ‘good schools’ constantly talk about the need to ‘get better’. While some writers, such as Hopkins (2001), defend teachers as committed to improvement, others, like Barth (2001), point to a widely held view that ‘attempts by schools to improve themselves consist of a basic pattern of grand pretensions, faulty execution and puny results’. It is little wonder that defensiveness has been a common response from practitioners and institutional leaders.

The talent of teachers and principals to resist even good ideas, when inflicted from above, can only be overcome, according to Barth, by school-based reformers leading as learners, within a school community committed to addressing the ‘non-discussables’ that impede learning.

What are some of these ‘non-discussables’? It has become a truism to say that students are not all the same, yet consideration of the teaching and learning implications of this has been subverted by demands for ‘improving’ standardisable results. The genetic, shared environmental and unique environmental factors that influence individual behaviour mean that their personalities differ in significant ways (Pinker, 2002), and that their learning will need to be considered in that light. Also, what tends to be allowed for far less is that teachers, likewise, are not all the same. They have different motivations, different pedagogies, and different environments to handle. They have different ways in which they can improve what they do.

We need to recognise diverse learning needs and cater for them – for students, teachers, school leaders and members of the broader school community. That is a huge task. We also need to be clear about what we mean by
‘improvement’ in this context, as well as the criteria that we should apply to gauge what improvement is achieved.

Schools can only be part of any intention to ‘improve’. The relationship between teacher, parent, student and political stakeholder is an interwoven tapestry. We lack the tools in many cases to assess what schools are able to do, or how well they do it. For example, league table comparisons, in whatever guise, purport to show comparison, whereas in reality they tend to show little more than what parents should be ‘aspiring’ to leave behind. Their use for identifying ‘failure’ best serves political stakeholders, since it helps to deflect responsibility. Social ‘failings’ such as youth unemployment can too easily be attributed to schools.

We are not talking here about making change for change’s sake. What we change needs to be better than what we have. It needs to be innovative and sustainable, with the capacity for further improvement over time on the basis of experience. Thus, alongside our innovations, we need to develop better ways of assessing their value, in the shorter and longer terms. That will need to take into account the element of risk that is inherent in all innovations, and the reactions to risk of those involved. Teachers need to feel confident and supported if they are to demonstrate and continue to demonstrate any willingness to take risks.

A contemporary example of risk taking is the introduction of thinking skills, based on a perceived need to making such skills explicit within a curriculum (McGuinness, 1999). It remains to be seen whether this will lead to genuine change, built on students’ meta-cognitive reflection and development of deep thinking skills, or whether it will lead to individual teachers and future-sellers ‘staking a piece of turf’ without affecting the industrial landscape. The effects may vary in terms of location and when we make our assessment. Perhaps thinking skills will go the way of the use in schools of computers for learning. After twenty years we still see computer use as ‘in its infancy’ (Parrott, 2003). But how do we make a valid assessment of progress? What criteria do we use? What consideration do we give to factors such as changed values as well as changed content? In practice, the defensiveness in schools, mentioned before, means that issues of new values and sustainability for educational change are rarely explored in any depth, let alone resolved. The relationship to learning is left to the individual classroom teacher, working in the context of a bureaucracy that emphasises accountability, driven by measurement, rather than partnership in addressing common aims.

The underlying structures of school are strongly embedded. A pessimist, looking at recent history as an evidence-base, might anticipate that, barring catastrophe or epiphany, no major change of structure is likely without symbolic upheaval. An example of this came with the Russian launch of the Sputnik, which had a rapid and large-scale effect on education in 1950s America.

Are we facing radical change on that scale? A number of challenging scenarios have been advanced. Some theorists have argued that schools as we know them might not exist in the foreseeable future, or that there will be no teachers in their current roles. The UK’s DfES’s (2003) Blue Skies report has explored some of these possibilities.

The fact is that we don’t know. But we do have to deal with the situation as we see it, while trying to prepare for what we will face in the future. Recognising the current limitations of schools as they exist, new approaches to teaching and learning are needed. In that context, we need to re-evaluate the responsibilities of the individual, be it student or teacher – to school as a social institution, and to the ways in which they progress their own learning.

The role of teachers in the 21st century needs to be clarified, appropriate adjustments made and value systems improved. Control of change based on bureaucratic priorities is not serving education, schools or students well. Where we go for advice on how to change things for the better is problematic, however. Educational research, for example, appears to be more about backing one side or the other, against each other, rather than resolving differences (Oppenheimer, 2003).

One way into this is to reconsider what we really think about learning – its importance, acquisition, use and evaluation. Currently, the valuing of learning is too strongly dominated by measurement of inputs and outputs, be they class sizes, Year 12 results, retention
rates, attendance rates, or teacher professional development attendance. We need to look more at what drives people to learn and what drives particular people to help in that process. Too often, teachers find their passion for teaching and their subject adversely affected by external factors that show little apparent respect for the teacher, in terms of skills, professionalism, commitment or achievements.

A substantial factor contributing to the climate I have described in this section is the nature and style of evaluation/assessment. Assessment is an important part of education, but examination systems driven by traditional paradigms, based on economic efficiency, are out of step with the need to support and value creativity, partnerships, and risk taking (built on academic depth). All of these are critical for meeting 21st century needs. As Earl (2003) points out, assessment needs to be about more than just the measurement of predetermined learning.

**Valuing teachers**

All effective teachers develop a pedagogical knowledge that has, at its core, a commitment to good teaching, for good formal learning outcomes. Related to this is a commitment to the student as a valued person.

What of the teacher as a valued person? School as a system has a strong self-sufficiency. Obviously, like any other institution, the school needs to be assured that its employees are performing at the optimum levels. But how does it recognise and evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of its teachers? And how does it respond?

The processes tend to be most visible when a problem arises. If a teacher is found 'wanting', school becomes an uncomfortable place to inhabit. Such problems do occur. They do need to be dealt with. But they constitute a very small minority of cases in the context of the overall teacher population. Each case needs to be individually assessed, using far better tools than we currently tend to find in use. A tendency for bureaucracies to see teachers as 'units', while advocating approaches to students that value individual difference and potential, creates a paradox. However, that tendency is encouraged by the relative isolation of the teaching role – at least in its most common manifestation. While no teacher should be an island, the segmented nature of the factory-school model means that teachers tend to work in (or withdraw into) their own world [classroom]. In most cases there are other environmental factors impacting on how they relate to the workplace but, in some cases, individuals can develop a relative lack of engagement in the school's bigger picture. Mackay (1998) warns us of the danger of unengaged workers who seek to insulate themselves. Conventional 'measures' may not pick this up, let alone address it.

The critical problem of teacher careers adds a further layer of issues. That urgent attention is required in this area, is evident from the high drop-out rates among new teachers, and also some experienced teachers, and the fact that this trend was picked up more than a decade ago. The Schools Council identified a danger for some teachers of boredom, leading to conservatism, built around negativity and cynicism (Schools Council, 1990).

Part of the problem here seems to relate to a lack of shared values about what teachers are required to achieve. Attempts to remedy the situation have underestimated the significance of this factor. Too often the change management approach fails to comprehend the disruptive impact of conflicting values and bureaucratic priorities on the teacher/student relationship. Gaps seem to be developing between experienced and new teachers, some seeing a recalcitrance in older colleagues or a disrespect from the inexperienced.

How to deal with this? Some in the bureaucracies seem to see the solution in waiting out the 'older' generation and replacing them with a new generation, more attuned to new ways of thinking. The economic attraction of this is appealing. However, there also appears to be a lack of any systemic regeneration of that 'next generation'. Additionally, as I have argued above, the problems of devaluing personnel and perpetuating structural constraints need to be addressed. The key lies in the first of the 3 Rs, identified earlier in the paper – it is about Relationships. There is a fundamental human need for individuals to seek deeper connection and ownership if motivation is to be sustained. Motivation for learning is a key factor in developing effective lifelong learning structures (Chapman et al, 2003), not only for students but also for teachers.
We have tended to rely on motivation that is ‘intrinsic’ to the role – for example, the teacher’s interest in particular areas of knowledge, and the desire to share that interest. A teacher’s passion for his/her subject, for teaching as a profession, for the school community, and for the students in his/her charge – all of these are driving forces for the teacher to remain current and involved. Beyond that, however, we need to look carefully at ways to help them deal with the increased rates of change and complexity, and to keep an open mind as they grapple with the educational implications and possibilities. Good teachers have always been interested in learning, but in the current world they require a personal commitment to lifelong learning approaches, a commitment which is acknowledged and supported by school leaders and systems.

**Teachers as learners**

So, having looked at some of the problems and issues, where to from here? What does it mean when we say that all teachers need to be learners, and what are the implications? Historically, the factory-school was based on teachers as authoritative experts in a relatively slow changing world. The present view of student learning (National Research Council, 2000), though, teaches us that there has been a shift; from accepting knowledge acquisition as sets of isolated facts or propositions, to the importance of applicability within wider contexts. Learners have to be more mindful of themselves as learners, and be able to act as independent learners.

Teacher Learning needs to move beyond any ‘lip service’ paid to the concept of ‘teachers as learners’ and be embedded within the culture of school, in contexts where outcomes can be seen and valued. The National Research Council (2000) views this as a major challenge for education systems.

Most successful people can recall a ‘favourite’ teacher who empowered their love in some aspect of learning; and in doing so provided an impetus for later action. Ask them and they will have a favourite anecdote. Research confirms the importance of such relationships. Lokan’s (2003) study, for example, found it is the relationship with their students that is a key sustaining factor for most teachers. The trinity of teacher, student and subject forms a powerful learning environment that school should be looking to empower.

How can we encourage this? Much energy is spent on seeking out ‘under-performing’ teachers; much more needs to be spent on developing positive learning environments – for all those involved in the learning process. Change, and at its core Teacher Learning, needs to be built around a positive commitment to supporting teachers as a valued profession. Such change, if it is to be successful, will be directed at those who are instrumental in the success of any new teaching and learning paradigms, the teachers.

Lambert and McCombs (1998) highlight the need to support learning within environments in which ‘the learner feels appreciated, acknowledged, respected and validated’. Teacher collegiality that involves talking about practice, sharing knowledge, supporting each other and working together for a common purpose, is a critical factor that is too often absent in schools and, as a result, in teacher action (Barth 2001). In many cases what is required is little more than regular opportunities for teachers to unite and work together as valued professionals within a school’s division of time.

**A new style of school leadership**

School, as a social institution, is beset by multiple, often conflicting demands. Principals are at the head of this, having to respond and be seen to respond to issues that may or may not be within their area of control, while simultaneously being expected to initiate reforms that will ‘improve’ educational outcomes. It is a truism that ‘it can be lonely at the top’, but the solitary nature of the Principal’s role is not helped by out-of-date hierarchical approaches that engender disengagement (APAPDC, 2003).

Like their teachers, principals are committed to meeting traditional expectations. Like their teachers, many are inadequately prepared to meet the demands of 21st century education. Defensive approaches too often lead to principals over-valuing those who support the principal’s agenda (Barth, 2001). Under pressure, too many school leaders limit their role to one
that is primarily about marketing and resource managing. Gaps have opened up between leaders who emphasise their own preoccupation with management and the teaching fraternity.

How can we improve things? A strong school culture requires leadership that can mobilise people and model required learning approaches (Senge et al., 2000; Cavanagh and MacNeill, 2004). A new type of school leadership is required, one that addresses the issue of teachers seeing the school outside their classroom in a poor light (Lokan, 2003). School leadership based on traditional views needs to adapt. Leaders need to see themselves, and be seen as, learners alongside and with their teachers. The value of collaboration for school improvement and effective schools is not new (see Fullan and Hargreaves, 1992), but schools and systems have been slow to value the structures needed to facilitate such relationship building. Cavanagh and MacNeill (2004) propose that ‘pedagogical leadership’ will only be evident when ‘there is an emphasis on pedagogical rather than administrative functions by the principal’.

Technology as saviour?

Over the last two decades, an increased role for computer technologies has often been suggested as a solution for limitations across the areas of school operations. What this entails has changed as new technologies have emerged, none more so than with the World Wide Web in the mid-1990s. With the current rate of development of new technologies expected to continue apace, there will continue to be opportunities for radical thinkers to sell future possibilities for change.

There have been many and varied visions of computers in schools – acting as tutors, serving as cognitive amplifiers, or being used as work tools. Such visions (and the assumptions that go with them) lie just below the surface of many change statements. Before jumping on any bandwagons, we should both learn from past experience and remember that the uses of technology, and the philosophy underpinning that use, remain in flux. Since personal computers became available for schools in the late 1970s (and even before that), there has been an ongoing debate on the educational merits of computers.

In practice, usage has tended to overtake the philosophy. Computing has become ubiquitous. It is an expected part of school, and debates on learning and computers have tended to be seen as a secondary consideration. It is easier to prioritise computers as a resource. The administrative use of computers has come to the fore. Some in the bureaucracy yearn for a future where curriculum will be delivered and assessed through the Internet. As a by-product, that would allow for measurement on-line of the results achieved by those charged as the classroom facilitators.

Where does that sort of thinking leave the concept of Teacher Learning? Are Teacher Learning and inclusion too hard, too expensive; too challenging? While school budgeting in the technology area continues to focus primarily on the provision of machines, there are those who will think so. But to think that way is to ignore the fact that computers, like any technology, are only as valuable as the uses to which they are put.

Over the past decade the digital skills of many students have bounded ahead as they make use of home computers, peer teaching and a propensity for ‘bricolage’ – the art of tinkering (Turkle, 1996). Many teachers work with this, creating powerful learning environments, based on shared learning and innovative application. For other teachers, such a prospect remains daunting. The title of the ‘Computer Skills for Terrified Teachers’ book series probably sums up their situation.

Much of the potential power of technologies to support Teacher Learning remains untapped. Their value as fast-changing, digital, personal tools has been hidden by traditional systems and work priorities.
Even after twenty years of computer-related technologies in schools, too much is left to the individual teacher. Change approaches remain machine-centric. For many teachers, computers have become an albatross rather than an eagle. Technology that could be supporting them, while they strive to find new ways forward, too often is a millstone around the neck. Relative lack of skills impedes their progress – whether that is in terms of their pedagogy, administrative, communications or learning. Meanwhile, educational systems and bureaucracies may find it appealing to explore other capacities of technologies – for example, to deliver, and see into, the classroom, giving a much clearer picture of what teaching and learning is taking place. Teacher Learning with, and about, computers and pedagogy, remains in its infancy.

**Teacher leadership**

Teachers have different strengths and different learning needs. There is a misconception that teaching consists of a set of general methods, and that a good teacher can teach any subject (National Research Council, 2000). One of the key elements of Teacher Learning should be a need to cater for teacher diversity. This relates not only to ability and commitment to taking on new challenges – such as technology – but also to the many other areas of school life where change is relentless.

Tooley has proposed six roles of teachers (2000) which provide a picture of just some of the varied factors that need to be taken into account. They include teacher as

- inspirer;
- learning guide;
- pedagogical assistor;
- seminal leader;
- human support; and
- supervisor.

Such roles require learning to be approached in many ways, if they are to be effective for the individual. No one size fits all. Conversely, no approach is going to achieve everything, even for a given individual. The concept of the perfect teacher is a myth in classrooms of multiple expectations and needs. Effective teaching is about doing the best one possibly can, through commitment to subject, pedagogy, working with others and learning (Hopkins, 2001). Good teachers can achieve this in different ways – teachers who can transfix as story tellers, teachers who can guide their charges safely through strange environments, teachers whose subject passion and communication skills can ignite a parallel passion for learning among their students.

Most teachers have that commitment. For commentators to portray the profession as lacking commitment is an attack on the essence of teaching. Undeniably, of course, commitment to learning is not the only source of motivation. Both Lokan (2003) and Maclean (1988) identify economic security as a driving rationale for teachers. However, in looking for improved teaching and learning in our schools, it is the demotivation of teachers, arising from disempowerment, which needs to be addressed – not a lack of commitment. Teachers are a costly yet invaluable resource for achieving effective learning outcomes. Using factory-model measures to demand extra/harder work won't lead to better educational outcomes.

The key issue here is leadership. Leadership that includes and respects can empower all. Leadership that lacks respect for what teaching is about, and which presses for unfeasible ‘improvements’, sells everyone short. Leaders need to be active learners too, with a commitment to establish effective communities of learners while challenging models of what effective learning looks like (National Research Council, 2000).

This new type of leadership needs to include a commitment of all in school to walk the walk, to share responsibility for student and school accountability, to seek a common approach towards making schools learning organisations (Holden, 2002). The constant question that needs to be addressed is: what is the example being set? Perhaps schools need multi-heads, each working as, and with, teachers while bringing different skills to their principalship as part of a unified school culture. As Barth (2001) puts it, 'the way to learn is by leading; the way to lead is by learning.'
The need for Teacher Learning

To achieve such changes in the way people operate and interact, we need to address the inadequacies of the factory-school. Teachers and school leaders need to be key players in that change. Teacher capacity for innovation in education and their more general range of expertise need to be drawn upon, and in doing so ownership can be promoted.

We need to overcome what Holden (2002) identified as a lack of recognition of teaching as a leading profession – allied to a lack of value given to the giving or receiving of 'craft knowledge' (Barth 2001). How we approach and promote Teacher Learning is crucial in changing such attitudes. Designated professional development sessions after the school timetabled day, for example, are bureaucratic 'solutions' that reflect factory-school thinking. Out-of-school professional development, without context or in-school linking, is like fishing without knowledge – hit or miss. Minimal public investment in formal professional development opportunities (National Research Council, 2000) exacerbates the problem.

Time is our major resource. It is finite. School decision makers need to show teacher time is valued. If a longer ‘school day’ is warranted then teacher time needs to be assessed and revalued appropriately. Stakeholders need to resolve the divisiveness created at all levels by non-inclusion in the related decision making. The empowerment of Teacher Learning can only come through inclusiveness. New models of pedagogical leadership, those built on asking, listening, including and leading a shared vision, need to be encouraged and supported.

There is much that can be done, within the current school day and structures, to generate more powerful teacher (and student) learning. Finding time that can be reallocated is one strategy. For example, lectures for senior students can enable the provision of larger classes, taught by teachers passionate about some subject matter. As well as preparing students for higher-learning systems, this can free up resources.

Open learning areas such as libraries can become information centres. Computer on-line learning areas can support large numbers of motivated, self-directed learners. Use of time in various areas of school operation can be reviewed and adjusted. Teams can be constructed from the bottom up and given school time as their viability and worth is established.

This need not be daunting. Change that starts small and grows organically is likely to be more sustainable (Senge et al, 2000). As an example, teachers can work across subject areas on new learning projects. Class work can be supported and positive change facilitated by teams.

In all this, the overriding need is for teacher leaders, leading by example. New structures are required that recognise and develop such teachers, as well as provide school structures to enable such investments to bear fruit. Perhaps then, constructive use of out-of-school time, appropriately valued, can be used to support in-school activities. As the National Research Council (2000) points out, 'it can be difficult for teachers to undertake the task of rethinking their subject matter. Learning involves making oneself vulnerable and taking risks.'

Conclusion

In this paper I have argued that a new Teacher Learning approach is required, to cope with the challenges faced in schools. These include

- increased rates of change and information overload across many areas;
- increasing demands, particularly with fast changing technologies; and
- complexity of modern life demands; economically, socially and legally.

What is needed is a new style of involved leadership that values teachers and includes them in the debate and decision making that takes place around change in education. This style of leadership needs to include an understanding of teacher diversity and the power of teams.

A new dynamic is required that re-evaluates the role of the teacher as community leader and contracted specialist. Evaluation needs to be cognisant of risk taking and teachers should be committed to open door classrooms. As Barth (2001) puts it, 'to learn is to risk.'
A reassessment of what traditionally has been provided – in terms of resources, structures and expectations – as compared to what is needed for effective Teacher Learning, is warranted. On the broader scale, what is required is a new kind of commitment at all levels, which will address structural shortcomings and the need to promote effective learning for all stakeholders. Teacher Learning will get more out of teachers – and they will give it willingly. In turn, students will continue to have cause to remember teachers as their key role models for learning.

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