

New Basics, New Curriculum - Making Old Schools 'New'

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Introduction

Schools are complex places. They are grand social institutions, situated in local places, the site of complex cultural struggles. In the schoolyard and in the classroom, individuals seek to find their identity mediating the images, messages and knowledges about their world. Simultaneously, issues of 'complex connectivity' (Tomlinson, 1999), the rapidly moving networks of 'interdependencies that characterise modern social life' (p. 4), place economic, political and environmental pressures from local, state, national and global realms, on schools. Pressures that are valued are welcomed and desirable, and enter through the front door. Devalued cultural entities, commonly misunderstood and considered deviant by teachers and parents, arrive by jumping the fences, hitchhiking in backpacks, or as illegal downloads, and remain marginalised by the dominant authority but are often fiercely guarded within youth cultures being played out in the school yard and classrooms. Other sets of values may be forced upon a school and become included in the school's rhetoric, but excluded in the practice of the social rituals performed by the school community in school culture. Some of the significant choices schools make in their response to globalisation are the issues I examine in this paper. Is it morally correct or educationally valid that some schools fail to mediate complex connectivity? Is trying to insulate their structures, policies, curriculum and students from the impact of globalisation ethically and morally more destructive to local cultural and economic communities left to battle the impacts on their own? Or do schools open their doors, engage in multidimensional flows and attempt to make sense of "fluid, irregular shapes ... that characterise

international capital as deeply as they do international clothing styles” (Appadurai, 1996, p 7). Process analysis of marginalisation issues that emerge at the interfaces between global forces and local cultures reveals boundary judgements and effected consequences on the community or systems within those boundary perimeters. For the purposes of this paper, I have chosen to analyse two schools currently operating within the New Basics (NB) Queensland Middle School Renewal Trial. NB, I argue, is the embodiment of global, national, state and local connectivities, and therefore, a curriculum model designed for students and teachers to mediate the complexities of globalisation. The implementation of NB in the two schools shows how schools respond to globalization at the level of curriculum and pedagogical reform. One school has embraced the trial, providing leadership, resourcing and ideology to facilitate rapid and massive change, while the other has adopted a minimalist approach to implementation in an attempt to avoid and shelter the school from its full impact. This paper’s analysis concludes by considering the consequences of each school’s reaction and responses to the NB in the context of uncertain political realities in the future, and makes predictions of the schools’ situated preparedness in the event of differing political outcomes.

Systemic Intervention: purposeful change

Teaching is an act of purposeful intervention within systems to bring about change for the better. Gerald Midgley (2000) outlined the philosophy of Systemic Intervention from general systems theory, applied to Social and Human Behavioural Studies. Intervention is defined as the act of attempting to bring about purposeful change. A system is defined as any entity of sentient beings, from a single agent (a teacher, a

student) to a dominant group (i.e. a classroom, year level or the whole school). The boundary concept, around and within which systems are positioned, is crucial to the analysis (p. 33 – 38). Systemic interventionists make first and critically, second order judgements. A first-order judgment is a boundary distinction drawn when looking ‘outward’ towards the world. The second-order judgement is the variety of judgements that can be made “...when looking ‘back’ at the knowledge generation system which produces these ‘outward’ judgements” (p. 80). A ‘knowledge generating system’ is something that gives rise to the existence of knowledge through its own activity (p. 76). Certainly a classroom is an obvious example of a knowledge generating system.

Teachers working within reflective practitioner models, are critical systemic interventionists. Reflective teachers make judgements, take action and critique, not necessarily in that order, but in a process cycle of reflective professional practice (see Diagram 1). For teachers this commonly includes making first-order boundary distinctions or choices to use explicit or implicit theories/methods for pedagogy and curriculum, conducting the action, and then reflecting on the pedagogy, considering the ethical consequences. Theoretical and methodological pluralism means that informed judgements are necessary, as different theoretical standpoints will lead to different methodological approaches. This is where the choices between boundaries will result in different boundary judgements between practitioners and explains why two teachers working from the same curriculum documents can teach their classes in entirely different ways. For example, a choice to do a social constructivist group activity, is a distinct pedagogical choice which limits or excludes other possible modes of instruction at the time of doing the activity. Because reflexive teachers

evaluate their actions for student improvement it follows that one reflects upon one's first order decisions and actions, rationalising, analysing and evaluating. Thus second-order judgement enable us to assess if improvement has occurred. Any agent within the system can make these judgements, and, as they depend on one's values and perspective, judgments of 'improvement' will vary according. Teachers, ex-students, the interested staff/parents or the administration may all have converging or conflicting judgments. Improvement is noticed when desired consequences have been realised through cycles of intervention, and, sustainable improvement is achieved when changes last within an indefinite future without the appearance of undesired consequences (Midgley, 2000 p. 130). Therefore if a teachers makes 'good' judgements between the plural theoretical positions on pedagogy, cognitive psychology, curriculum resources and behaviour management techniques, which results in student engagement and fosters a sense of innate learning curiosity, a sustainable improvement in student outcomes has been achieved! Second-order judgements are essential to the analysis of the capacity of the system (in this case the class) to generate knowledge, defined to mean 'any understanding' phrased in language or image and including perceptive knowledge (p. 81). Reflection is not only fundamental to understanding, but the critical interventionist is aware that boundary judgements are closely tied to value judgements, therefore reflectiveness informs and supports one's moral awareness of the purposes of the intervention itself (p. 135).

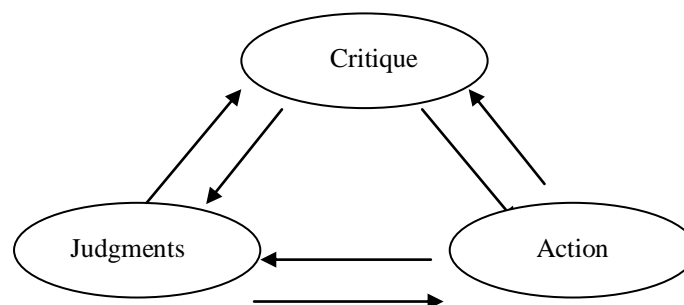


Diagram 1. Three aspect of a methodology for systemic intervention (Midgley, 2000, p 132)

When I was teaching young adolescents, in a Middle School (which we shall hereon in refer to as School B) setting, I was a critical systemic interventionist. I was a purposeful agent participating in a trial of the NB project and I did so by choice. However, this was not always the case. I worked for another NB Trial school, School A, and one of many classroom teachers I was told we were to implement NB, but not why. Despite the school's mandate, I quickly became aware that I was powerlessness to effect change or influence over the environment in which I worked. I faced a professional crisis. The choices I faced included to continue implementing a vast curriculum, with resources that were withheld, a lack of willingness and leadership to develop collaborative networks, with an administration which, offered limited support, professional development, or the philosophical commitment to NB. Or to attempt to work at changing the system from within? I withstood the second option and with the appointment of one supportive Deputy Principal who recognised the problems, I was appointed as an internal Critical Friend to school A. I led the implementation of two Rich Tasks, *International Trade* and *National Identity*, (equivalent to syllabi documents and fundamental to the NB curriculum structure) and attempted to educate and build support for NB at the staff room level despite strong resistance to NB.

In 2003, I transferred to School B. School B, like A was at this time a NB Phase One trial school. School B accommodated and respected principles of power sharing, flattened hierarchies, and embraced consultation, professional development, communication, collegiality, transdisciplinary curriculum, while fostering parental

engagement and student success, engagement, self-esteem and active citizenship. School B, as a knowledge generating system, mediated the ‘complex connectivity’s’ (Tomlinson, 1999), that NB, as a response to globalisation, brings to schools. School B worked to develop leadership and a Professional Learning Community, and restructured to provide staff and students with the support they needed to negotiate and make sense of the multiple environments within which we all interacted.

Introducing New Basics

This discussion must commence with a brief overview of NB. It is essential to understand that NB is not just a curriculum reform project under trial. It is a school renewal project premised on providing schools with the guidelines and opportunities to change what they deem necessary to implement a future/s orientated curriculum. By this, we mean Education Queensland’s (EQ) philosophy of education as a pragmatic response to a globalised, post-industrial society. Schools are to meet both the economic and social imperatives to enable students to cohesively and collaboratively, constructively and critically engage with the world (Luke et al, 2000, p. 11). NB recognises the morality of encouraging educational intervention in our schools at this scale. The NB Technical Paper (Education Queensland, 2000) draws on current literature to present the importance of school renewal in the face of a rapidly changing, globalised world.

“Globalised economies are typified by highly mobile populations seeking employment, lifestyle and community. There are rapid flows of population within and across the state and across national borders. In many Queensland communities traditional jobs are disappearing, new industries and economies are coming on

stream, and children are constructing their identities primarily in relation to global consumer and media cultures. Parents and teachers are dealing with students who bring new kinds of skills and knowledges, and are facing serious issues about identity, family structures, poverty and social dislocation. It is in this context that issues like curriculum change and behaviour management need to be understood. Schooling systems that choose to ignore or 'put a lid' on such changes will remain reactive shock absorbers, rather than agents for constructive change and the improvement of students' life chances (Education Queensland, 2000, p 14).

What went wrong?

I propose that School A was perfunctory in its implementation of NB. With a feeble commitment to pedagogical and structural school renewal, sustainable improvement of student outcomes was not achieved. School A made first and second order decisions during 2000 to 2002, which defined the extent to which they would accept NB values and the extent to which they would maintained their prior beliefs, ideologies and assumptions, reflected by their school culture. To analyse the implications, let us consider a series of diagrammatic representations of the relationship between School A and the NB Branch (see Diagram 2a). School A, or Agent One, made narrow boundary judgements regarding the extent to which they would adopt the curriculum philosophy of NB. Agent Two is the NB Branch enclosed within the broad EQ Department. The NB Branch made wider judgements, to include, for example, 35 trial schools across Queensland, and this is represented in the diagram by the secondary boundary. The area between the primary and secondary boundaries is a marginal area containing elements that are excluded by School A and included by the NB Branch.

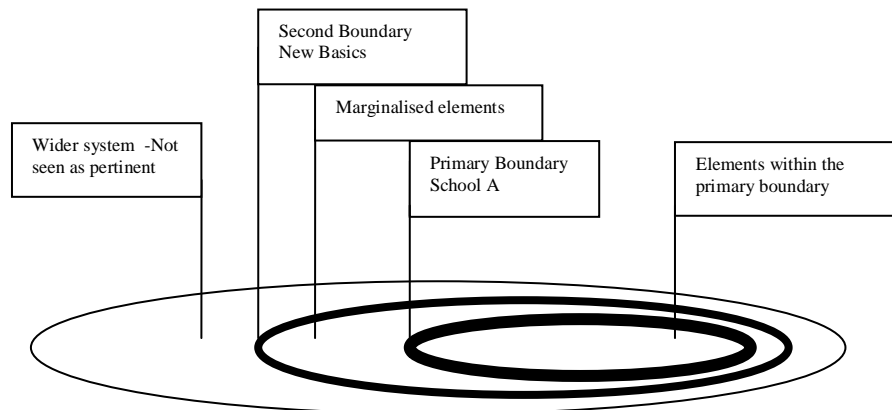


Diagram 2a: Marginalisation (Adapted from Midgley, 2000, p. 143).

From 2000 to 2002 I observed a wide range of issues of conflict between School A and the NB Branch. These issues surrounded: inservice, the use of critical friends and Implementation Officers, school structure, selective content, departmentalised containment of Rich Tasks (curriculum documents), alteration of the Rich Tasks, teacher/administration relations, the Moderation model, staffing, responsibility for implementation and risk management, and underpinning all of this, waning commitment to the NB Trial.

In each case of conflict, School A and NB have values they regard as sacred or profane. Sacred values, according to Midgley, are 'valued values' held by an agent, and profane values are the 'devalued values' of the second agent by the first (Midgley, 2000, p. 142 – 145). I would like to change this terminology. Agent One, School A had three choices. The first is that School A could adopt the values of the wider NB system, and accommodate those values in the form of substantial change.

Alternatively, Agent One can choose to exclude the values of the NB Branch. The third choice School A had, amounted to passive resistance to NB. As the most prevalent action taken, NB Branch values were met with formal acceptance but in school culture and practice, their adoption did not become a substantial part of school renewal and change. As diagram 2b shows, the primary boundary was focused upon and reinforced as the main reference for decision making. NB, its people and issues were relegated to the margins and disparaged as the secondary boundary was ignored (see Diagram 2b).

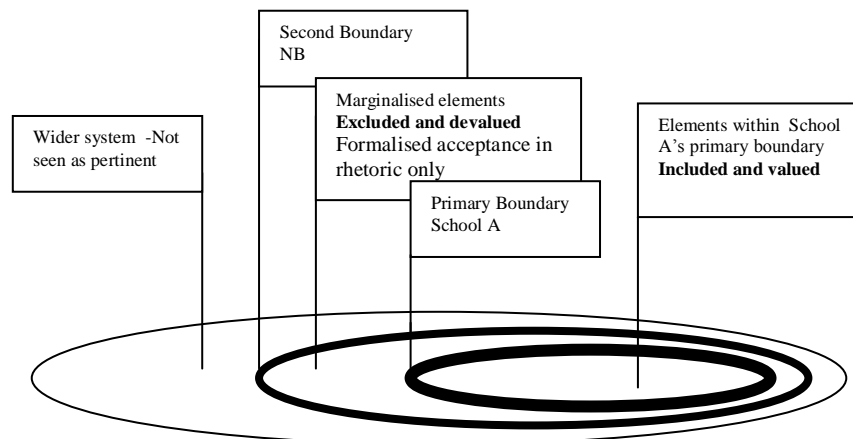


Diagram 2b: Marginalisation (Adapted from Midgley, 2000, p 143).

Resolution of the conflicting values between School A and the NB Branch expand or contract the primary boundary (see Diagram 3). Midgley (2000) states that in the presence of a conflict, social rituals, that is observable behaviour containing stereotypical elements and symbolic expression of wider social concerns, emerge to express the competing discourses and reinforce boundaries and knowledge systems between the two agents (p. 144). Thus the rituals that emerged could be observed in the school's culture. Conflict between agents is resolved when one or the other of the boundaries becomes dominant and elements in the margin become included or

excluded. If the conflict arose from within the second boundary, in this example the NB Branch, and was resolved with School A's adoption of the NB value into their primary boundary, the primary boundary could be seen as widening. However, in the event that the conflict is resolved by School A's rejection of the NB Branch values and ethics, passively or defiantly, the primary boundary would become smaller, and the area of the devalued NB Branch enlarged.

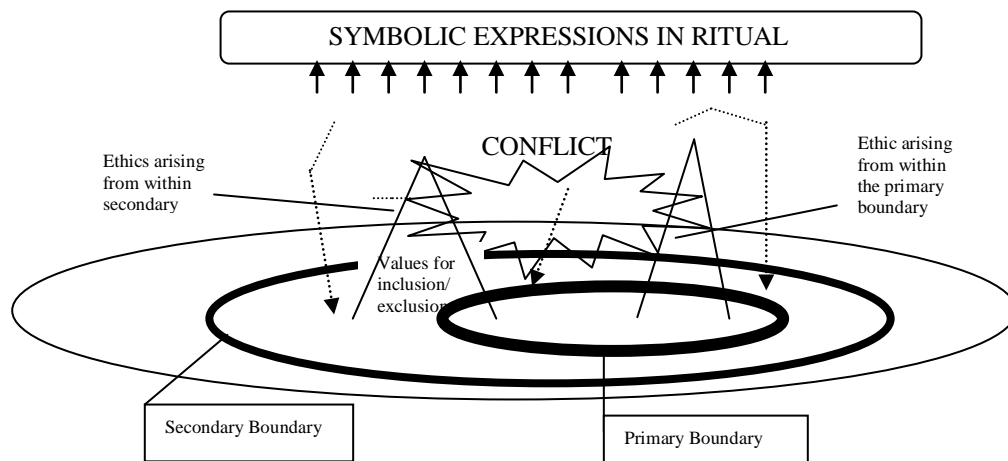


Diagram 3: Margins, ethics, values for inclusion/exclusion and ritual (Adapted from Midgley, 2000, p 144).

Sustaining improvement

Now let us contrast School B's relationship with the NB Branch. It too had discursive struggles emerging from the secondary, or NB Branch boundary, but sought to resolve conflict by including the values of the Branch, to expand the size of the school's boundary. Not all conflict that emerged from the NB elements became included in School B's boundary. However, I argue that School B's school culture reflected many of the adopted values from the NB project. That is, the symbolic rituals of behaviour,

reflected in the School B's culture, that emerged within the primary boundary of School B strongly reinforce the whole system and the imminent enlargement of the its primary boundary (see Diagram 4a and 4b below).

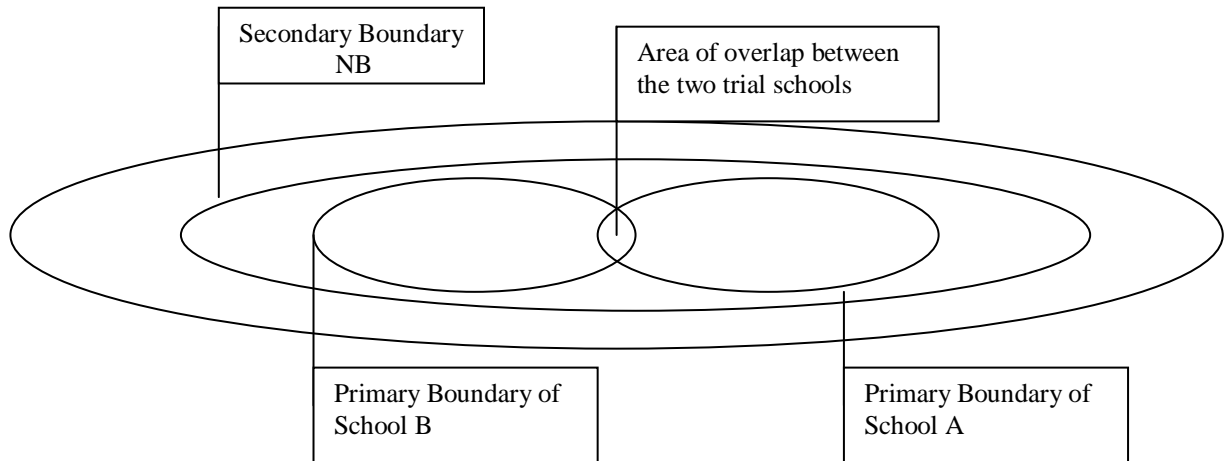


Diagram 4a: Boundary placements of Schools A and B within the NB Issue prior to conflict.

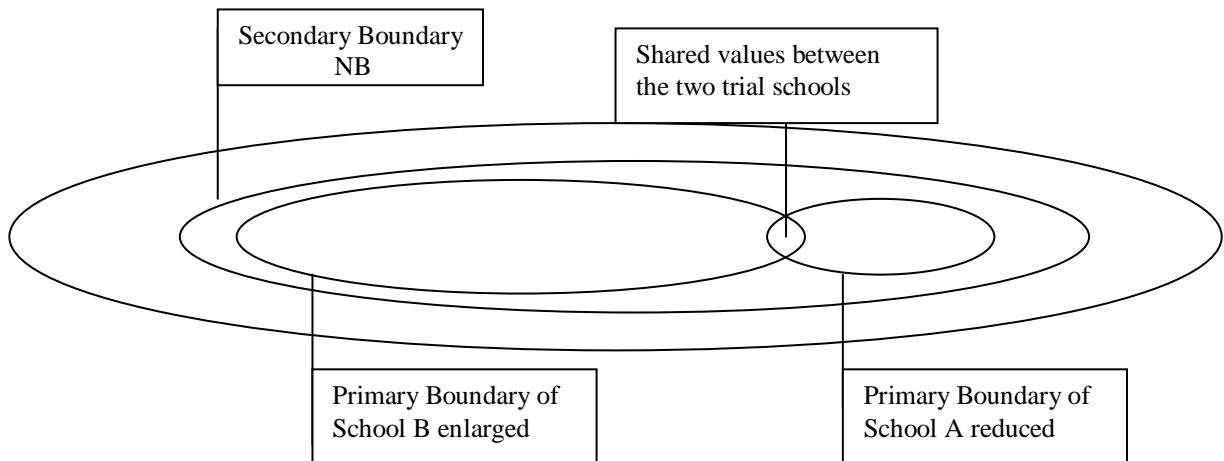


Diagram 4b: Boundary placements of HSHS and KGSC after conflict and resolution.

Boundary critique is helpful to examine the impact of competing systems values and their resolutions. And it is in the observation of the school culture that the moral implications and consequences of the boundary decisions are revealed. NB required

schools to make purposeful interventions to the school system/s in response to the pressures on schools to change from outside (see Fullan, 2000) which included globalisation forces. As Tomlinson (1999) writes, globalisation is multidimensional. It is a "...simultaneous, complexly related processes in the realms of economy, politics, culture, technology and so forth ...it involves all sorts of contradictions, resistances and countervailing forces." (p. 13). In 'locally situated life', systems, from the individual, business community, family unit and schools, are all engaged in a systemic process of mediating the boundaries of value laden systems in the search for identity. Interaction with globalisation can be powerful. "One way to think about the consequentiality of culture for globalisation... is to grasp how culturally informed 'local' actions can have globalising consequences" (p. 24). For schools and their students to engage meaningfully and potentially with the forces of globalisation, our actions need to be recursive. Tomlinson (1999) accepts that local systems are increasingly 'learning entities', what Midgley (2000) describes as knowledge generating systems. Therefore from a system's perspective, the first-order boundaries are drawn and second-order judgments provide local knowledge generating systems, or 'social entities' the capacity "...to act 'back upon' themselves, to adjust to incoming information about their behaviour or their working... It is this reflexive sensitivity of [systems] in relation to inputs from human agents that marks the peculiar dynamism of modern social life and that defines the connectivity between a multiplicity of small individual local actions and the highest global structures and processes" (p. 25).

The curriculum challenge posed by globalisation is clear. Schools must prepare students to mediate the multidimensional flows.

“It is also about preparing people to deal with the cultural and community changes that flow from their use. New technologies, globalised economies and communications media will require: new skills and knowledges for dealing constructively with rapid community change; new forms of cultural and social identity; the blending and reshaping of cultural traditions; exercising new rights and responsibilities of citizenship and civic participation; communication across diversity and difference of culture, gender and background” (Education Queensland, 2000, p. 13).

NB requires schools to realise a dominant purpose, regardless of individual views or resistance of subagents (teachers, parents, and students) within the school system. It is beyond the scope of this paper to explore issues of resistance to the NB, however a partial explanation may come out of this understanding of globalisation itself. While globalisation can be seen as offering new understandings of experience in wider, ultimately global terms, like a double edge sword, it poses a threat to the security of locality (Tomlinson, 1999, p. 30). My argument is that schools must respond. The subagents (teachers, parents and students) of the school system may be supported by the school system, lead by its administration, to mediate the impact of globalisation on their school. The implementation of NB is only one example of globalisation entering schools, but it came ‘through the front door’ when the agreement to participate in the trial was signed. For some subagents (teachers) this may constitute the greatest impact of globalisation they have had to encounter inside the four walls of their classroom. As such NB goes beyond an agenda of school reform. Fullan (2000) argues that the key driver to school reform is ‘reculturing’. He positions the

Professional Learning Community (PLC) at the heart of cultural change, and its routine focus on matters of assessment and pedagogy. "...the development of a [PLC] must become the key driver of improvement. When this happens, deeper changes in both culture and structure can be accomplished" (Fullan, 2000, p. 582). In my observations of the implementation of NB, school renewal called for reculturing with a commitment to the PLC, strong leadership, and willingness to change school structures. It is under these three headings that I reveal the moral implications and consequences of School A and School B's systemic interventions.

The Professional Learning Community

A PLC, according to Louis, Marks and Kruse (1996) contains five elements of practice: shared values, a focus on student learning, collaboration, deprivatised practice and reflective dialogue (p. 760). The concept is written into the NB Technical Paper. The PLC is defined there as a premise of "improved, equitable student outcomes and effective reforms in curriculum, pedagogy and assessment that require high levels of teacher professionalism, sustained intellectual work and shared ownership of reform within dynamic school communities focused on learning" (Education Queensland, 2000, p. 27). Fullan (2000), as I stated above, believes the PLC and its focus on pedagogy and assessment, is at the heart of school culture. My experience of a PLC in practice is the collaborative engagement of teachers in inservice, planning, school policy, reflection and evaluation, and research. Shared values, NB or otherwise, provides a dominant underlining paradigm, where shared understandings and values grow as each element of the PLC is practiced.

“The trial schools require a coalition of educational interests committed to an honest appraisal of the situation and a shared set of strategic solutions” (Education Queensland, 2000, p. 27). As we have seen from the conflict analysis of School A and the NB Branch, the administrators marginalised School A from other trial schools in the NB project and created confusion for staff within the school. The PLC at School A provided minimal in-service and professional development for staff. The NB ‘Immersion’ program, for which funding was provided by the branch to the school, was offered to approximately 10 percent of staff in 2000 and 2001. No in-school training was provided to the remaining staff regarding the philosophy, scope and nature of NB. Education Queensland mandated ‘Productive Pedagogy’ in-service, described as “...a key plank...[of the NB project]” (Hayes, Linguard & Mills, 2000, p. 11). This was conducted over four weeks, in one and a half hour Thursday afternoon whole school sessions. It was criticised at the time for failing to provide enough time to examine the issues pertinent to pedagogy and assessment. Productive Pedagogy did not become a common discursive practice in daily teaching and learning at School A.

Collaborative planning, particularly cross-discipline planning time, critical to the implementation of a fully integrated transdisciplinary curriculum, was not provided during student free days or during class schedules. School reculturing emerges when systems of teachers work together to define curriculum, establish assessment standards for internal moderation, select and share resources, discuss pedagogical strategies, team teach and analyse research data. “...teacher’s sense of affiliation with each other and with the school and their sense of mutual support and responsibility for effective instruction” is increased (Louis, Marks & Kruse, 1996, p. 760). The failure

of School A to adequately assist teachers in collaborative planning opportunities further heightened levels of teacher fatigue, stress, isolation and privatisation of practice. I observed teachers finding it simpler to blame NB for the complex problems that emerged in trying to implement NB seemingly, alone, than to criticize their colleagues and friends in middle and upper management.

Measurement indicators of student performance, student satisfaction, teacher satisfaction and parental feedback were culturally met with cynicism, hostility and suspicion at School A. The parental community was given limited information about NB. Internal research conducted in Semester 1, 2002 revealed the extent of teacher and student dissatisfaction with the trial. However, in the absence of effective school leadership, NB memorandum and documentation went missing or remained unopened, even when staff members looked to find information deliberately. I established and maintained my own line of communication with the Branch in order to be informed of the NB trial's progress, and communicate with other trial schools. Management discouraged external help throughout 2000 and 2001, and a culture of caution and secrecy emerged. An invitation to a NB Branch Implementation Officer, provided to guide, assist, and enable School A to implement NB, bypassed the administration until it was proved that the Officer's help was essential. Comments he made regarding School A's lack of commitment to the project were used in the process of marginalising the NB values and reinforcing School A's primary boundary distinction. This condition may also account for the reason why the school's appointed Critical Friends amounted to the occasional visitation of one in 2002, but complete absence of the second.

A PLC of staff, with professional development and pedagogy as its primary focus, was a powerful knowledge generating system in its own right at School B. In-service and professional development were extensive including 12 hours of Productive Pedagogy inservice conducted over a 3 month period with the NB appointed Critical Friend. When Implementation Officers were no longer required, a culture of support to staff had developed. For example, frequent meetings between core staff, scheduled during class time, were provided for staff on request, and the timetable built in shared preparation and planning 'spares' to facilitate collaborative planning, dialogue and team reflection. Staff meeting agendas were set around vision, feedback of research, curriculum developments, and the school's social environment for students. Student welfare and improved outcomes were the driving focus at School B.

Measurement indicators of performance, student's satisfaction, teacher stress, and parental feedback were sought regularly in formal, informal, statistical and qualitative collection methods. The information obtained informed school policies from behaviour management to uniform wearing. Student samples of completed outcomes were provided to the NB Branch when possible, and were in use within the school as exemplars for students viewing and teacher in-school moderation meetings before NB a moderation strategy was introduced to the trial program. The Parent Advisory Committee was established to meet monthly with the Principal to discuss NB procedures, trial progress, sequencing of tasks, staffing, structure, resourcing and curriculum issues. The Parent Advisory Committee and staff held Term 1 parent evenings to orientate them into the School B's culture and learn more about the NB curriculum. In 2002, a partial trial of 2 classes in year 9 undertook a broad number of Rich Tasks. The decision to do so was made in consort with the school community

and staff. It was agreed that full-implementation would be a strain on resources whilst staff inductions into the newly formed Middle School were yet incomplete. Parents of students were provided with the option to allow their children to participate in the trial classes. 56 students nominated and went through the trial year. Rich Task grades were known to students and parents and staff and parents were looking to develop the internal and NB reporting systems to complement one another. To report upon skills and knowledge, teachers redesigned the internal reporting systems at School B using NB Referent questions, the curriculum organisers, as the organiser of the report.

Leadership

Research into educational leadership contends that leadership is crucial to provide direction and vision for a school both directing, guiding and distributing leadership capacity. "...[S]upportive leadership focuses efforts on issues related to school improvement: collegiality, shared purpose, continuous improvements, accountability and responsibility for performance, and structural change" (Louis, Marks & Kruse, 1996, p. 763). The School A's leadership was vaguely committed to NB at the outset. The dominant agents at School A intervened in School A's curriculum in a coercive manner, which reinforced pre-existing power structures rather than transform them. Power structures were reinforced when NB was imposed upon the middle management Heads of Departments (HODS). Subagents (teachers) were highly resistant to Rich Tasks and students/parents uninformed stymieing opposition or discussion. One Principal attempted to build leadership capacity within the school with an initiative to establishing groups of interested teachers to meet regularly

(although no school time was allocated). Groups would research and report back to the whole staff on Pedagogy, Assessment, developments in education research and Information Technology. Notably missing was reference to NB or the school structure required to accommodate a fully transdisciplinary junior curriculum within the high school setting. When the Principal left the school, his initiatives were disbanded. Important changes were typically made without consultation or open dialogue. A case in point was the formation of a subject in Year Eight called 'Built Environment' to develop the Rich Task of the same name. In 2002, Home Economics and Manual Arts were taken off the subject range in Year Eight. The subject was not provided with any budget or funding, a curriculum plan and planning time between teachers was not provided, and the dozen teachers time tabled to teach this subject were expected to deliver the whole task to an individual class, which is the antithesis of NB transdisciplinary philosophy. "...research on school effectiveness and school change suggests that formally scheduled time is necessary to implement significant change agendas and to maintain innovation" (Louis, Marks & Kruse, 1996, p. 762).

The disbanding of the assessment group may account for the failure to develop a mechanism for reporting of RTs in the internal reporting and assessment procedures. These questions were left to be resolved by individual subject departments. Outcomes of completed RTs were concealed within the internal reporting mechanisms. The language and value system of the internal reporting system subsumed the Rich Task's outcomes, by repackaging aspects of the tasks into a series of formative and summative assessment tasks, with criterion reference written by the classroom teacher for their class. Internal moderation to find comparability between school-based assessment of Rich Tasks rarely happened unless initiated by a teacher.

The administration did not provide leadership, resourcing or support to enable these processes to operate as per the trial's mandates.

If intervention is defined as the "purposeful action by a human agent to create change" (Midgley, 2000, p. 113), one can assume that the intention of a NB intervention is to be doing schooling for the better. Who decides and how that decision is made distinguishes a process orientated systemic approach (Soft-System) (Midgley, 2000), from a modern, hierarchical, and outdated system of autocracy. The ritual expressions of the trial's implementation were being expressed quite differently from School A to School B during the same years. For School B, the participation in the trial did not reinforce authoritative, modern power structures, but adopted elements of a Soft-System process approach to implementation, i.e. collaborative and negotiating (pp. 194 – 195). Power was not dispersed, but managed by offering to share the vision and leadership, and placing priority on the centrality of the teacher's pedagogy. Administration retains the responsibility of risk management and is accountable to the Parent Reference Group, P&C and School Council. As strategies for implementation, comparative to School A, School B significantly reduced teacher resistance and reluctance to participate in the trial. "Within the emotional economy of the effective school, teaching and learning are afforded the highest valuing within the structure of the school. Here principals are educational leaders. Such leadership also sponsors a spread of leadership across the school, rejecting any zero-sum conception" (Lingard, Mills & Hayes, 2000, p. 11).

School structure

The Technical Paper (Education Queensland, 2000) recommends that:

“[T]he logical approach to systems-wide reform would involve: setting up enabling and generative conditions, and providing intellectual and material resources for a focus on pedagogy and for renewal of curriculum and development of authentic assessment instruments at the school level; enabling teacher development, ownership and problem-solving around issues of pedagogy, curriculum and assessment; tracking and studying which teacher and school-based solutions change student outcomes; consolidating, codifying and institutionalizing those resources for broader systemic dissemination and generalization” (p. 37).

School A retained a minimalist approach to implementing NB by selecting to overlay the Rich Tasks, one feature of the NB project, into existing subject departments. The fundamental failure of School A to provide the means to link Rich Tasks with a cross section of discipline domains throughout the school, undermined the ability of individual teachers to deliver curriculum content, and students to gain from the depth of skill and experience each task intends to offer NB students. The goal of alignment between pedagogy, assessment and curriculum, three systems working to complement and enhance one another the ‘central rationale’ of NB (Lingard, 2000, p. 4), cannot be achieved within the structure I worked with at School A.

By contrast, School B had undertaken radical structural reforms. Years eight and nine changed from being subject domain learning areas to Transdisciplinary Studies (TDS) to enable the school to trial the tasks with the least possible alterations to their original

design, pedagogical and philosophical intent. TDS teaching teams integrate English, SOSE, Maths and Science, within open classrooms. School B has made substantial changes to include NB values with the establishment of a Middle School in 2001, embedding key middle school practices which includes students seeing less teachers, and teachers assigned only to teach in the Middle School. Therefore, time and focus on NB was accommodated within the structure. The physical layout of the Middle School was overhauled with building grants, facilitating open classrooms, Middle School playgrounds and the Middle School teacher's staff room.

Conclusion

This paper was initially developed in late 2003. Now, in early 2005, the political future of the NB project remains as uncertain as it was two nearly two years ago. School A did not renew its contract with the NB Branch after 2004. School B will continue. I had originally asked how both schools would be placed if the political paradigm within EQ presently supporting the trial changed or was withdrawn. One extreme, but unlikely scenario, might present an ironic twist for School B in the event that the trial was abandoned and replaced by a hypothetical 'back to basics' model of education. A conservative, structuralist education model, typified by the '3Rs' approach to schooling, might have positioned School A favourably within that new ethical overarching system. Rejecting the values of the NB Branch, its values may be more compatible with a secondary systems boundary replacing the NB Branch boundary. Leaving School B, on the other hand, ill positioned, having made significant boundary decisions, generating knowledge and values more closely

aligned to the NB Trial. Removal of the wider system would leave School B in a vulnerable position in this hypothetical changed political system.

However, I suggest that this is unlikely because NB has developed as a response to increasing pressures of globalisation on our local communities in which schools are central. The authors of NB, trial participants and other interested stakeholders concerned with providing a quality education, understand that globalisation will continue to pervade schools and communities and must be embraced. “The fact that individual actions are intimately connected with large structural-institutional features of the social world via reflexivity means globalisation is not a ‘one-way’ process of the determination of events by massive global structures, but involves at least the possibility for local intervention in global processes” (Tomlinson, 1999, p. 26). Features of the NB project have changed following the findings of the Research Report (2004). For instance, an increased range of schools have participated in NB, the role of key implementation staff has changed and the model of moderation strategy continues to evolve in response to concerns raised by school systems. This in fact demonstrates that primary boundaries are dynamic. While the focus of this paper has been to examine the shifting boundaries of school systems within the NB system, conflicts between the branch and schools can also be resolved with an adoption of the school’s values too, a complex accomplishment given the many numbers of school systems that exist within the NB primary boundary. A precedent in curriculum development has been set in Australia. The NB model of outcomes based learning is ‘futures orientated curriculum’, in that “Outcomes should be futures-oriented, based on a philosophy of education committed to the preparation of students for new workplaces, technologies and cultures” (Education Queensland, 2000, p. 12). By

providing a means by which we can encounter and mediate forces of globalisation, as a school system, empowers, strengthens and opens opportunities and possibilities for young people and their communities. NB will leave a legacy in Australian and global education for many years to come.

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