THE IMPLEMENTATION OF PHILOSOPHY INTO SCHOOL CURRICULA AS A CHANGE PROCESS:

Hints for Teacher Educators

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The implementation of philosophy into Australian schools provides an example of educational change and the role of change agents. This paper examines the introduction of philosophy in one school in the light of the work of four Australian researchers: Northfield, Taylor, Atkin and Matthews.

1. NORTHFIELD

Dr. Jeff Northfield presented a paper in Melbourne which addressed the topic 'The Change Process - Achieving the Vision' (Northfield 1988) when I was midway in my classroom research at Yarra Valley Anglican School, (Victoria, Australia). He stressed that in order to arrange the conditions necessary for educational change, the 'leader' should have a clear view of how it occurs and that 'educational change involves individuals being engaged in a learning process'. For this to occur, he argued, what is being introduced must be meaningful to those involved in the change.

Northfield's major emphasis was leadership, but as he described his six areas of planning for change I reflected on my work at 'Yarra Valley' and the process through which philosophy had been introduced into the school. As our way of proceeding closely followed his recommendations, an answer emerged as to why change in

the school's curriculum had occurred. Although the following describes my work at Yarra Valley, my method of working in each school I visit has followed very similar lines.

In 1986 Northfield had written that analysis of change efforts in schools indicated that activities must be undertaken in the six areas emphasized below.

1. Establish an individual or group who accepts responsibility for the change and its implementation.

At Yarra Valley the individual was the Director of Educational Services, who was also teaching English to Years 8 and 12. He involved the Head of the English Department. In the Prep. School (K to 4) the responsibility was accepted by the Head. In the Junior School (5 - 8) individual teachers worked together to develop the program.

It has become an established feature of my department's (Social and Educational Studies) work with schools to have a Philosophy co-ordinator on staff. They provide vital liaison between trainers and the teaching staff.

2. Teacher training and development.

This occurred in three ways throughout the school. These were:
- 'formal' in-service activities (e.g. a 2 day workshop),
- awareness/information sessions, and

- long-term work by a trainer (with individuals in classrooms.

As more staff became interested, they attended external workshops at their level of interest. Experienced staff members continue to assist their colleagues, and some are currently working with me as 'experts' at Victorian Philosophy for Children Association teacher training workshops.

3. Regular consultation and reinforcement for those involved.

This occurred, and continues to occur, through my visits to the school and subsequent workshops held for other interested staff.

4. Monitoring and evaluation of the change. Is change intelligible, plausible, fruitful, and feasible? Is the change an improvement?

These issues were the subject matter of discussions with teachers who were taking classes, as well as conferences with the Director of Educational Services and the Head of the Preparatory School. Something we all learned quickly was that time must be put aside for these discussions, because they led to decisions about future ways of proceeding based on successful and less successful implementations. If the changes in classroom practice had not been seen as an improvement in the teachers' eyes, the program would not have been continued.

5. Communication to all sectors of the school community.

We held 'Information Nights' in which parents of students participated. Staff meetings were the forum for passing on information of progress to other staff members not directly involved in the philosophy program. This links directly with Northfield's item number six.

6. Opportunities for staff to explain their experience with the change to others.

The dissemination of information, together with the enthusiasm of the teachers involved, has been the major reason for other teachers' willingness to become involved in the program. Peer support then exists. Teachers have said that it is unprecedented for them to have another teacher observing them in their room (willingly) and team teaching in early stages. Both the teachers and the students enjoy the involvement by two or more staff.

This discussion of involvement has a wider 'ripple effect' than merely within one school's walls. The natural networking of schools in a geographical area, particularly primary schools, means that ideas spread from school to school via teachers, children and parents. School principals feel the pressure to investigate the concept of using philosophy in classrooms from these sources, and the involvement thus spreads.

In the same paper Northfield (1986) makes the following five observations about change. My work in schools has shown them to be crucial aspects of the process of change.

> (i) There is no educational change until individuals change. When the stimulus for the change originates outside the school (e.g. government policies and guidelines) the first challenges are to seek connection with the teacher experiences within the school. At this stage it requires people to translate ideas into implications for the school.

When the only person wanting philosophy introduced into classrooms is not a teacher (usually the school principal), change is very unlikely to occur. It is only if teachers on that staff can be enthused and adopt the program 'as their own' that change will occur in classroom practice.

> (ii) Participants have concerns which must be addressed in the process of change.

Northfield (1988) quoted Hall and Hord (1987) as having provided the clearest example of this assertion. They describe how initially there is demand for more information about the change being implemented. Personal reservations about this should be provided for on an individual basis. Time must be taken to ensure this occurs in early stages. As teachers develop their understanding and confidence, the input required will decrease.

> (iii) Change is a long-term process in which · teacher learning is crucial.

For learning to occur, the new ideas must be coherent, plausible and have recognisable benefits. Because there are constant changes being proposed for teachers and schools, the curriculum innovation being introduced must be assessed as fitting into the existing curriculum and time available. Philosophy in Australian schools has been a successful innovation largely because it has been integrated into language programs. As I discuss in detail later in this paper, another im-

portant factor is that the benefits in terms of student learning are quickly discernible. Because of changes to the Victorian schools curriculum, like Frameworks (Victorian Ministry of Education 1988) teachers are having to prioritise change, and only the programs assessed by individual teachers as essential for learning will survive.

(iv) In any change effort the first months must be marked by anxiety and uncertainty.

Without encouraging support in the early months the program will not be continued. The 'leader' walks a narrow path between intrusion and assistance. Australian teachers are generally not willing to have 'strangers' (other than parents and student teachers) in their classrooms. While most seem to be happy to work with colleagues, the 'outsider' is often viewed as threatening. I have had many teachers admit to being nervous (and often demonstrated this by shaking) when I have worked in their rooms. The fear of failing is very prevalent. The 'leader' must earn their trust and demonstrate the benefits of the new model without an air of superiority. The trainer's aim should be to have the teacher soon think they can do it as well as the trainer and willingly 'take over'.

Philosophers without any, or much, classroom experience, strike problems in two main areas. Firstly, their 'superior' knowledge of philosophy, which they cannot avoid demonstrating, often leads teachers to say, in a defeated manner, 'I could never do it like that.' They probably often could not match the trainer's philosophical background, but their teaching strengths, coupled with a good knowledge of the program, and how to apply it, must be perceived by them as valuable. It is the trainer's task to work through the anxiety and uncertainty with teachers.

Secondly, philosophers lack background in the areas of teaching strategies, curriculum knowledge and school structures. Often they make unrealistic claims or suggestions about possible ways of proceeding. The trainer must have an understanding of the school environment with its strengths and shortcomings. This means that the trainer should be teacher trained and have classroom experience together with a strong philosophical background. The solution reached in Victoria is that both teacher educators and philosophers are jointly responsible for training teachers.

(v) 'The participants will learn most effectively by trying the new ideas and reflecting on practical experience'

This is why the 'follow-up' work in schools is the most vital component when introducing philosophy into schools. The provision of opportunities for teachers to discuss experiences and the time this takes must be built into the program. The requisite frequency and duration of university staff members' presence in schools is hard to define quantitatively. However, we have noticed that teacher participation often dwindles with the lessening of our visits.

Does this mean change has not occurred? Merely writing philosophy into a curriculum document does not ensure change will occur or new practices continue, but it is not feasible for visits to schools to continue ad infinitum. If the program is adopted into classrooms successfully, it should be possible to leave teachers to their own devices. The trainer's assistance can then be on an 'on call' basis.

2. TAYLOR

Nayano Taylor wrote an article called 'Lecturing, Change and Change Agents' (1987) whilst involved in the Participation and Equity Program (PEP) in South Australia in 1987. Her account is a personal description of what was for her 'a new learning perception'. She describes her involvement in a psychotherapy course which some call the human growth movement, and many of her findings and recommendations support Northfield's views and my own views and findings. Whilst working with adults who said they wanted change she

... gradually started to realise that any change in a human being meant learning, and that learning meant change. And, although we talk about educational processes as though it is possible to learn some things, like maths and geography, without being changed in ourselves in any way, that idea is incorrect. 'Intellectual' learning involves the emotions and values, just as working for psychological change always involves intellectual change.

After I had fought with some of my clients for a while — 'resisting their resistance' — I started to learn that thinking of some people as being resistant to change, while there may be theoretical support for the idea, would get me nowhere in practice ...

I learnt that if I really wanted to help people to change, then I needed to see at least some of the world as they saw it, and it was very im-

*portant that the client perceived me to have
that understanding ...*

*I had to be clear that I wanted change for my
client, above all else. That the change that
s/he wanted was more important than any
theories, or strategies that I held dear. I discov-
ered that if you let people alone to determine
their goals, and the path that they want to
take to those goals, and simply help them to
see themselves and their path more clearly,
then the changes which occur will be life posi-
tive.*

Taylor's work demonstrates how vital it is to
see the world as your 'clients' see it, to let them
determine their goals, but be there to help them
to 'see themselves and their path more clearly'.
This is a very time-consuming process. Her find-
ings are important for situations where philoso-
phy is being introduced into classrooms. Trainers
need to be understanding of the classroom set-
ting and all its pressures. Finding time to talk
with individuals and small groups is essential.
The trainers need not always have a specific
agenda apart from hearing the teachers express
concerns and talk of successes and failures.

The report that follows was written by a
teacher educator whose role was to follow up an
initial teacher workshop. It illustrates that with-
in a supportive framework of informal discus-
sion, relevant issues will emerge and new learn-
ing can occur.

School Liaison Following the Workshop

*In the weeks following Susan's [the trainer]
visit to the school, I talked with the teachers
taking Prep., and Grades 1 and 2 during re-
cess and lunch breaks. I visited the classrooms
of both the Prep. and Grade 1 / 2 teachers on
two occasions and those of the Grade 2 and
another Grade 1 / 2 teachers once.*

*Teachers seem to appreciate the opportunity to
talk about issues that emerge and perplex on
an informal basis. Although it is often difficult
to program, providing an opportunity for
teachers to share ideas and concerns with each
other is also worth while. The mutual support
provided by such discussions could be one of
the reasons that philosophy has a stronger ba-
sis in schools where more than one teacher is
involved in the program.*

*The extent of teacher preparation and lesson
evaluation are critical issues for teachers be-*

*ginning to work with the program. There is a delicate
balance between the essential familiarisation with the
concepts and skills associated with the program and
dissipation of enthusiasm in the face of an additional
workload. Fortunately, with encouragement and sup-
port, most teachers soon feel that the effort is rewarded
by advantages for both teacher and student.* (Iser,
1989)

Taylor introduced the PEP program using simi-
lar techniques to those we used with the philoso-
phy program. Our experiences with a variety of
schools led us to run workshops for particular
schools, hold parent information sessions, and
work with individuals in classrooms. Our work
is always in response to requests, whereas her
PEP program was more attuned to the economic
circumstances of the school community. Howev-
er, her ideas about learning to accept others' val-
ues are directly applicable to our situation:

*If we truly want schools to change then we
need to treat them as we would any learner.*

*One school which I visited has been very suc-
cessful in getting parents to participate ... I
heard about how one mum had arrived at the
school and spent several hours letting off steam
... The principal listened to her. The Parent Li-
aison Officer listened to her. Then they invited
her to be on the school council ... . Not only
was she listened to, but she believed that she
had been listened to ... . From being anti-
everything, she now works hard for the school.
Through her work on the PEP committee her
attitudes to many things are being challenged.
But she feels listened to on the committee too,
so she's willing to listen ... .*

*My ideas about how change happens, and my
gut feeling from listening to more than 30 in-
terviews, tells me that we have been creating
resistance. And, that to listen to what people
in schools know and feel may seem time-
consuming and unproductive, but doing so will
make change possible — and give us an edu-
cation at the same time.*

Listening to, and talking with, teachers in-
volved in making changes, although time con-
suming, is a vital aspect of change. The altered
attitude of the parent described above is similar
to that of many parents and teachers with
whom I have worked. But while schools often
have to accept a PEP program as a government
initiative based on economic grounds, philoso-
phy is different. If teachers cannot see the bene-

fits of the program after initial information or training, there is no reason for them to become involved. If the appropriate procedures outlined earlier have been followed (that is, time, listening, seeing the situation from their viewpoint), and have not succeeded, there is no point in their continued involvement.

3. ATKIN

Dr. Julia Atkin's work on 'Why are some people effective learners?' (1989) is important for two reasons. Firstly, it helps us understand why some teachers embrace change, and secondly, it explains why the Philosophy for Children program has been enthusiastically taken up by teachers and students.

Atkin said that for effective learning to occur, motivation and arousal are required. She believes these arise from either personal need (eg. fear of failure, self-initiative), or trauma (eg. urgency).

She identified the motivating forces behind changing structures in schools as challenge and struggle, evaluation, freedom to set goals and progress at one's own pace, excitement, a sense of achievement, readiness to change, emotional involvement, and freedom to make mistakes.

Most of these characteristics are present when we observe change in teachers' teaching styles as they embrace philosophy and they are also present in the practice of the 'community of inquiry' (the methodology which is part of Professor Matthew Lipman's Philosophy for Children Program). Atkin emphasised the need to help students make connections with existing knowledge. The gaining of knowledge meaningfully and applying it to new situations is required for learning to occur. These are the strengths of the philosophy program that we emphasise to teachers when introducing it, and which Atkin recognised.

4. MATTHEWS

Dr Robin Matthews (1990) presented research findings in the area of 'Change in the Curriculum' at a professional development conference for school principals.

He referred, in particular, to the work of Hall, et al. (1973) at the University of Texas at Austin. Hall's 'Concerns-Based Adoption Model' (CBAM) deals with the stages of concern expressed by teachers about an innovation. CBAM assumes that change is a process, not an event,

A. SELF AWARENESS	1. I'm not concerned about it.
Informational	2. I want to know more.
Personal	3. How will using it affect me ?
B. TASK	
Management	1. It's taking a great deal of preparation.
	2. How is it affecting my students ?
C. IMPACT	
Collaboration	1. How can I relate what I'm doing to what others are doing ?
Refocussing	2. I have some ideas about something that might bring about improvements.

Figure 1: CBAM Stages of Concern

which occurs in individuals before institutions. It is a highly personal experience which comes from developmental growth in feelings and skills, so interventions must be related firstly, to the people and, secondly, the innovation. The figure above shows the stages.

I have observed teachers who are adopting the Philosophy for Children program pass through precisely these stages. Teacher educators from the Philosophy for Children program have taken the CBAM principles into account in the design of their in-service programs. The concerns of individuals are considered at all times, and the program is related to the particular school environment. At Yarra Valley we assessed and acted upon the current concerns and levels of use of the teachers involved.

One of the assumptions of CBAM is that change takes quite some time. Matthews and Suda (1982) believe it takes three years for the teachers to change their behaviours and become users. This is what I discovered. In 1993, Philosophy is still an important part of Yarra Valley's curriculum, and there is an on-going commitment.

Although this paper has concentrated on the change which occurred at one school, the activities which must be undertaken in order for change to occur and be sustained are important for all schools. Key factors are:

1. Trainers must ensure that continued assistance is available for schools according to their needs,
2. Time must be made available by trainers to work through areas that are of concern to teachers as they begin to use new curriculum materials,
3. A co-ordinator should be established at

each school to liaise with the trainers and monitor their staff's progress.

Six years spent working with teachers have demonstrated to me that if these essential features are present as teachers begin to adopt Philosophy then their continued involvement is very likely.

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