

CONNECTING WITH THE 21ST CENTURY

**Dr John Roulston
Executive Director
The Association of Independent
Schools of Queensland**

**Paper delivered to the Australian Conference on
Lutheran Education**

Tuesday, 28 September 1999

Royal Pines Resort, Gold Coast

CONNECTING WITH THE TWENTY- FIRST CENTURY

DR JOHN ROULSTON

*'I hope, for a moment, to lift your chin from
the demands of the present to consider the
very near future horizon. That's where we're
going fast, and it will profoundly affect your
business...'*

..//Shrikumar
shri@cs.umass.edu
1999

INTRODUCTION

1. The topic is 'huge', although one could say:

“But it’s only a couple of months away.
If you’re not ‘connected; with the 21st
century already, you’re too late.”

2. So, I’m delimiting the topic to only a few connecting points:

Society, Education/schools; including
leadership and governance,
and Teaching.

SOCIETY

1. To look at the mountain of literature about what's 'down the track' is to be introduced to a whole new vocabulary, including:

Globalisation

Demassification
Digital Nervous System
Cyberspace/Cyberage
Reculturing
Cybrary
N-Geners
Velocity

And that's only a few!

2. Why 'Velocity' - that's a word we've used forever ...

- Bill Gates (1999) says:

"If the 1980s were about quality and the 1990s were about re-engineering, then the 2000s will be about velocity. About how quickly the nature of business will change. About how quickly business itself will be transacted. About how information access will alter the lifestyle of consumers and their expectations of business..."

3. To continue with Gates (1999) for a minute. He says, about going digital:

"The successful companies of the next decade will be the ones that use digital tools to reinvent the way they work."

4. It will put us, says Gates, on the edge of a shock-wave of change:

'Going digital will put you on the leading edge of a shock-wave of change – a Digital Nervous System will enable you to do business at the speed of thought – the key to success in the Twenty-first Century.'

5. However, it's not technology for technology's sake, and must not be! It will re-shape our world, our schools, our teaching, and make our day to day thinking more strategic:

'The new way is not to apply technology for its own sake but to use it to reshape the way companies (schools?) act ...

The goal is to make business reflex almost instantaneous and to make strategic thought an on-going, iterative process – not something done every 12-18 months, separate from the daily flow of business...'

6. We're entering the technological 'small-is-beautiful' era: palm devices, handheld PCs, sub-notebooks, dashboard computers. The 'Ipic' is a match-head sized web-server – a chip which is a complete micro-computer and costs less than one dollar! Applications!!
7. There is a view that the next century will belong not only to technology, but also to the entrepreneur; in fact, some have dubbed it the Entrepreneurial Age (Williams 1999).

8. Note the development of Intrapreneurs (companies within companies) – charter schools?

9. Note Chin-Ning Chu, business consultant and author:

‘Spirituality is going to be a very important element in how we approach business... when we’re good at one thing, it helps in all areas.’

- cited by Williams 1999.

10. The dominant value held by most entrepreneurs in the past was financial success. Now, new values and viewpoints are coming to the fore: family life, being aware of social issues, quality of life.

11. And what’s the connection between entrepreneurs and education? Alvin Toffler, in a recent interview said:

‘Education is another field where you can expect a vast number of entrepreneurial opportunities for niche ideas on how to encourage better learning...’

12. But, before we jump in too quickly, Bill gates has another point to make:

‘We always overestimate the change that will occur in the next two (2) years and underestimate the change that will occur in the next ten (10). Don’t let yourself be lulled into inaction.’

EDUCATION/SCHOOLS

1. Alvin and Heidi Toffler say predicting the future can't be based simply on current trends – at any time, chance elements make a variety of futures possible. (But for three decades the world has listened to their predictions, which have been pretty much spot on – even the dissolution of the Soviet Union, the disposable society, disintegration of the family unit, etc)
2. In terms of education, the Tofflers say “the current ‘factory’ system is going to crack ... because it is out of sync with what the emerging economy and society will require.” (Smith, 1999)
3. I predict:
 - Increased partnerships across sectors and with other Stakeholders/groups (eg. Government/non-government; denominational/denominational; school/business)
 - Development of virtual schools
 - Increased numbers of ‘alternative philosophy schools’ (eg. Steiner, Montessori, Sudbury)
 - Greater involvement of home schoolers in school-linkages
 - More distance education offerings
 - A greater number of ‘for profit’ providers
 - Schools within industry
4. I also predict much of what is ‘status quo’ remaining.
5. In terms of Governance/Leadership:
 - A greater emphasis in schools on ‘shared’ leadership – Teamwork, collaboration, ‘community of leaders’ approach.

eg. Blanchard: leaders are people managers
Covey: moral authority by developing a sense of community and conscience.

Moss-Kanter: the kaleidoscope analogy re patterns in an organisation

6. Michael Fullan (1998) says leadership of schools for the 21st century is about 'breaking the bonds of dependency'. We have to think outside the box.

- Dependency, created by overload and vulnerability

"The walls of the school have come tumbling down... 'Out there' is now 'in here' as government policy, parent and community demands, corporate interests and ubiquitous technology have all stormed the walls of the school..."

- There's no answer out there (management 'fads' ?) that will substitute for the complex work of changing one's own situation. No silver bullet!
- Reculture, not merely re-structure.
- 'Scale up', but how?

"The educational leaders of the 21st century, paradoxically, will find greater peace of mind by looking for answers close at hand and reaching out, knowing there's no clear solution."

7. But education **is** different, as Professor Karmel (1998) reminds us:

'... the community, and especially politicians, should accept that educational institutions are *sui generis* * and should be run accordingly.'

We should not allow ourselves to become captive to the mantras of modern managerialism in which the problems of management are abstracted from the contents of what is being managed.'

* *sui generis* - of its own kind, peculiar, unique (OED)

TEACHING

6. Having computers in the room is necessary, but doesn't necessarily mean greater effectiveness.
7. How best to use technology? Teachers' dilemma!
8. The most potent force for change when it comes to technology is the students themselves – the Net generation, or N-Geners.
9. Today's and tomorrow's children/students are so 'bathed' in bits and bytes – VCR, CD Rom, etc (Tapscott, 1999), for them technology is part of the natural landscape. 'To them', says Tapscott, 'digital technology is no more intimidating than a VCR or a toaster.'
10. This new technology is beginning to create in children and in schools a culture of learning, an excitement, a sophistication somewhat missing in some students today.
11. This has already – and will be evident even more so in the future – caused teachers and students alike to shift in their thinking about teaching and learning:
 - *From linear to hypermedia learning*
(eg. More interactive and non-sequential)
 - *From instruction to construction and discovery*
(eg. Creation of learning partnerships)
 - *From teacher-centred to learner-centred education*
(eg. Collaboration on tailored learning experiences)
 - *From absorbing material to learning how to navigate and how to learn*
(eg. N-Geners can synthesize as well as analyse)
 - *From school to life-long learning*
(eg. N-Geners enter a world of life-long learning from day one)

- *From one-size-fits-all to customised learning*
(eg. Treated as individuals)
 - *From the teacher as transmitter to the teacher as facilitator*
(eg. Learning is becoming a social activity, facilitated by a new generation of educators)
12. We need to be aware, though, that research is already pointing to issues of gender equity in cyberspace (see Weinmann & Haag, 1999)
- There's an alarming technological divide between boys and girls. Girls are more likely to favour clerical and data-entry courses than boys. Boys are more likely to favour graphic arts and computer-aided design than girls.
 - Some software being used (eg. In maths) shows stereotypical roles for males and females and an imbalance in the proportion of their representation.
 - There's a significant opportunity for teachers and teacher educators here in ensuring gender equity and high standards in the cyberspace classroom.

CONCLUSION

1. Encompass change. We must not ignore change. To do so is to deny students opportunities that changes offer, to the detriment of society generally.
2. Education is unique. There's no silver bullet, but independent schools are in the box seat in terms of taking-up the opportunities the changes offer in leadership, governance, partnerships, teaching and learning.
3. Let's learn from the N-Geners and the 'Nintendo kids' whose attitude is, "Let me try – if I don't like it, I'll reset it."

4.

“Life is a path you beat while you walk it.”

Antonis Machado (Poet)

‘(This line of poetry) is the most profound lesson in planning and strategy that I have ever learned.’

De Gues.A. (1997)
The Living Company

REFERENCES

Bennett, Bill (August 1999) 'Small is Beautiful'. *Communique*

Fullan, Michael (1998) 'Leadership for the 21st Century: Breaking the Bonds of dependency'. *The Best of Educational leadership 1998*. ASCD

Gates, Bill (1999) *Business @ the Speed of Thought*. Extracts in 'Viewpoint', *Communique*, August 1999

Karmel, Peter (October 1999) 'Past, Present and Future'. *Educare News*

'New Style of Leadership', (October 1998) *AISWATCH* #9.

Shrikumar (1999) 'Ipic – A match Head Sized Web Server.
<http://ccs.cs.umass.edu/~shri/ipic.html>

Smith, Scott (March 1999) 'Future Speak' (Interview with Alvin & Heidi Toffler). *Entrepreneur*

Tapscott, Don (February 1999) 'Educating the Net Generation', *Educational leadership*.

Weinmann, Janice & Haag, Pamela (February 1999) 'Gender Equity in Cyberspace'. *Educational leadership*.

Williams, Geoff (April 1999) '2001: An Entrepreneurial Odyssey' *Entrepreneur*