



Lutheran Church  
of Australia

THE 2003 T.T. REUTHER ORATION  
National Principals' Conference  
Thursday 28<sup>th</sup> August 2003

## **WINDOWS**

*Views, perspectives and reflections on contemporary education, framed with particular focus on the Lutheran School.*

*Loyd R. Fyffe*

Distributed by Lutheran Education Australia  
197 Archer Street  
North Adelaide SA 5006

## **THE REUTHER ORATION**

The Reuther Oration acknowledges the outstanding service of the Rev TT Reuther to Lutheran education in Australia from 1955, when he began duties as a chaplain at St Paul's College, Walla Walla, NSW, to 1993 when he retired from the position of National Director for Lutheran Schools.

Pastor Reuther's life within Lutheran schools commenced when he was a student first at Light Pass Lutheran Day school and later at Immanuel College.

After completing theological study at Immanuel Seminary he took the opportunity to undertake post graduate studies from 1950-1954 at Concordia Seminary, St Louis. Whilst on board ship (returning from the USA) he received a call to become chaplain at St Paul's College, Walla Walla, where he served to 1962.

After serving two parishes (Appila and Coonalpyn) from 1963-1968, he was called to be Headmaster of Concordia College Adelaide, where he joyfully served for fourteen years plus one term until 1983 where he accepted the invitation to become the inaugural national Director for Lutheran Schools.

During his outstanding service to Lutheran schools in Australia, he also completed Master Studies in Educational Administration.

He was an active member of the former Headmasters' Conference, member of the Australian Council of Education Administration, and honoured for his services to education by being made a Fellow of the Australian College of Education.

His ministry to Lutheran schools was highlighted by a professional approach based on a clear theological thinking. In the inaugural Reuther Oration, Pastor Reuther spoke of faithfulness, which was a characteristic that those associated with schools admired in him. He modeled faithfulness.

The Reuther Oration is designed to provoke and promote thinking about an aspect of Lutheran education. The Oration is usually delivered as part of the National Principals' Conference.

## **LOYD R FYFFE**

The 2003 Reuther Orator is Loyd Fyffe, Head of Good News Lutheran School, Middle Park, Queensland.

Loyd has been in positions of leadership, both Government and Lutheran since graduating from Geelong Teachers College (Deakin University)

A keen student of administration practice and education, Loyd has undertaken extensive post-graduate studies. He holds a Diploma of Teaching (Geelong Teachers College) Certificate A, (Victorian Education Department) Graduate Diploma of Theology in Education (Luther Seminary), Bachelor of Education (University of SA), Master of Education (University of SA) and is currently studying for his Doctor of Education (Griffith University).

Loyd's current areas of interest include values education, social justice issues and the sociological contexts of contemporary education.

'The world is f----ed!' Not my words but the words of a young person...a female. There was a time in the not so distant past when such a comment may have elicited a school suspension or even expulsion, but far from censure and exclusion this mindset, the thinking behind this conclusion, should be embraced, endorsed and encouraged. The young person in point is a product of our Lutheran School system or, more correctly, a product in spite of our Lutheran School system.

Words are powerful, they can conjure up the pictures of our thoughts, they can be read as emotional barometers, or measure, like litmus paper, our moral alkalinity, acidity, or worse, neutrality. Words are often the windows into different worlds of meaning and experience and dreams. I want to spend the next few minutes looking through different windows and, I want to use words to do that.

Our students look out through windows, indeed we lament that some of them do it far too often and far too long, especially during class time. When our students look through windows to the world outside what do they see? The literature tells us that they see an array of competing and often conflicting forces. Researchers tell us that our young people see the effects of changing family structures, changing labour markets, changing community structures, a World changing under the pressure of conflict, and unchanging schools. They see, and experience, the effects of individual changes resulting from puberty and sexual activity. And they see a world where the media and technology soak up their time and their resources in an all-consuming way.

## **Sociological Windows**

### **The Family**

There is ample evidence that Australian families are in the midst of rapid change. In Australia and elsewhere, the dominance of the conventional nuclear family continues to decline (Coleman, 2000; Wise, 2003). In addition to heterosexual married couples heading families, young people now see 'a plethora of new family arrangements' (Coleman, 2000, p.233). These include lone parent families, step and blended families, live-in partners, de facto relationships, remarriage, same-sex partners with children, and divorced couples with children living together. Indeed, flexibility has become a basic principle of intimate adult relationships (Lee, 2001). The lone-parent group, in particular, has experienced a dramatic increase in proportion over the last three decades, increasing from 9% in 1974 to 21% of Australian families in 1997 (Wise, 2003). Indeed, the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) projects that by 2021 the proportion of single-parent families will increase by between 30% and 60% (Australian Bureau of Statistics [ABS], 1999).

Changes in family structure have repercussions for young people. Divorce rates have shown an increasing trend since 1981 with more than 55,000 divorces granted in Australia in 2001. Just over half of these divorces involved children (ABS, 2002). These statistics alone indicate that a significant proportion of children and adolescents will have to cope with family reorganisation, and with the 'loss' of one parent. Seabrook (cited in Wyness, 2000, p.13) concludes that the rearrangements of relationships and the subsequent re-creation of new familial units, including half-brothers, half-sisters, step-mothers and step-fathers, creates a sense of perishability of human relationships.

### **Labour Market**

Perhaps the most significant shift affecting family organisation is the change in the labour market which has seen a rise in maternal employment. The increased employment of women was precipitated in part by economic conditions as well as the attitude of women to seek work in the paid workforce. Economic and social forces have continued to shape the labour market, and Wise (2003, p.4) notes that in August 2000, 70% of women of peak childbearing age (24-34) were in the workforce. The increased rate of maternal employment has resulted in greater numbers of children spending increasing time in non-maternal child-care. Concomitantly, there has been an increased participation of fathers and grandparents in child-rearing, and greater numbers of children spending time in professionally-run child care centres, after-school care facilities and individual homes other than their own (Wise, 2003; Wyness, 2000).

Structural changes in the Australian economy reflecting global market changes have, in addition, meant a growing pressure on parents to spend longer hours in paid work. This, coupled with more insecure employment, an increased need for both parents to work, and greater job mobility (Edgar, 2001) have altered the general childbearing landscape. Indeed, Maley (1996) concludes that in the space of the last

30 years there has been 'a profound decline in parental participation in the lives of a large proportion of children' (p.26).

### **Community**

Young people derive many of their self-identity referents from their active social interaction with their peer and friendship groups (Adler & Adler, 1998). However, young people do not live in isolation, and the peer culture which they develop, both influences, and is influenced by, the adult community in which it is located (Adler & Adler, 1998; Smith, 2000b). Despite the advantages that could develop from a young people–adult symbiosis, there exists an uneasy alliance which is not always comfortable for adults.

Young people see adults categorising them with a *pot-pourri* of conflicting labels. Some adults see that young people are out-performing their teachers and parents in technology. Others, however, worry that they are 'secretive', 'unsupervised' – just a Web site or a video game away from becoming sexually permissive, dangerous and violent (Tell, 2000). Historically, young people have been seen to be potentially disruptive to social order (Bessant et al. 1998) or as Giroux says, 'Youth are no longer seen at-risk anymore; they are the risk' (cited in Tell 2000, p.8). In order to manage young people, adults impose boundaries of exclusion (Giroux, 1998). Typically these boundaries define what young people are not, cannot do, cannot see, cannot listen to, or cannot be. Adults have described, for example, the age at which young people can drink alcohol, leave school, vote, join the armed forces, earn money, or consent to sexual intercourse.

Contradictions abound for young people. Economically, they are valued as a precious resource, yet are also a costly burden to parents and the community. Politically, they are held in a dependent posture, yet expected to grow into independent adults. Sociologically, they are protected by adults, yet are frequently excluded by their adult community. And technologically, they are able to simultaneously encounter globalised relationships, yet experience the atomisation of social life (Smith, 2000b). However, according to Hersch 'the distinguishing feature of today's youth is not technology (or contradictions)... it is aloneness' (cited in Tell, 2000, p.13). Bessant et al. (1998) note that it is often 'the regular daily practices of exclusion that most of us don't take too much notice of that impacts on the lives of many young Australians' p.202.

## **Physiological Windows**

### **Puberty**

Young people look out of their school windows and see their classmates developing the physical attributes of puberty earlier than their parents did. Indeed some students today begin puberty as early as 9 years old (Coleman & Hendry, 1999, p.8).

The timing of puberty is an important issue for young people because the resulting changes in physical appearance and body shape during and following puberty impact, among other things, on the body image and self-esteem of the individual (Williams & Currie, 2000). Research shows that achieving puberty early, late or on time, compared to the majority of the individual's age peers, has different implications across the sexes (Coleman & Hendry, 1999). Generally, studies have shown that, for boys, early maturation carries with it social advantages, whereas late maturation can be more of a problem (Coleman & Hendry, 1999). An early onset of puberty in girls is often greeted less favourably compared with early maturing boys, because of the associated weight gain and breast development (Milne-Home & Milne-Home, accessed online 27/4/2003). Being pubertally 'off time', whether early or late, causes difficulties for adolescent adaptation because it places the young person in a socially deviant category. The

decline of the average age of the onset of puberty in the twentieth century has meant that young people are now sexually mature at younger ages (Seiffge-Krenke, 1998).

### **Sexual activity**

Studies show that the age of first sexual intercourse is declining for both boys and girls (Bingham & Crockett, 2002; Brooks-Gunn, Schley, & Hardy, 2000; Cobb, 1998). In one Australian survey, it was noted that 21% of teenagers reported having had sexual intercourse at 13 years of age or younger (Zubrick, Silburn, Garton et al. 1995, cited in Heaven, 1996, p.89). Bessant et al. (1998) reported that at 15 years of age, the percentage of young Australian people who had engaged in sexual intercourse had risen to 27%.

Peer pressure is a stated reason young people engage in sexual activities at an earlier age (Heaven, 1996). And it seems that sexual intercourse is an important ticket admitting young people into peer groups. Indeed Bingham & Crockett (2002) found that, 'adolescents who initiated sexual intercourse the latest had the poorest, rather than the best, quality peer relations' (p.127). However, young people in the late 'first intercourse' timing group reported having the most positive family relationships, the most frequent church attendance, the greatest commitment to school, and the lowest involvement in problem behaviours (Bingham & Crockett, 2002).

It is important to note that the sexual behaviour of young people takes place in the context of adult attitudes and behaviour. Today we live in a society which is open about sexuality. Young people are exposed to sexual material on television, in teenage magazines, and on film and video. Most importantly young people see adults 'place sexual satisfaction high on their list of personal goals' (Coleman & Hendry, 1999, p.102).

## **Political Windows**

Young people look through the media window on television and, if they choose, the newspapers, and see a world broken and divided by conflict. The conflict of warring nations, bloody conflict between ethnic groups in a dozen places, conflict between neighbours, conflict in relationships.

They see weekend traffic jams on the roads leading to the cemeteries in Johannesburg. Traffic jams as people line up to bury the dead, young and old alike; those struck down by the terrible AIDS pandemic, leaving aging grandparents to care for as many as 14 orphaned grandchildren or worse young children caring for even younger children, often in squalid conditions. They see greed and corruption in corporate institutions; CEO's receiving millions in severance pay because they stuffed up a public company.

And they see Government leaders lying about children overboard and lying about how long it takes to process an asylum seeker and lying about weapons of mass destruction as the precipitating factor in engaging an invasion of Iraq. Shame on our political leaders for lying and shame on us for letting them get away with it. And shame on the two-thirds of Australians who believe John Howard knowingly misled them over the reasons for going to war with Iraq; but seem not to care (Weekend Australian July 26-27, 2003. p.19).

Our young people see this political hypocrisy, and they see the indifference of adults. They see greed. They see children behind razor wire in Australian Refugee Detention Centres. And they see Governments refusing to sign the Kyoto Agreement and what that could mean for the one atmosphere we all must share. Our young people look through windows and see the landscape of our shame. No wonder young people say that the world is stuffed.

## **School Windows**

### **A Student View**

What can we make of the view which students see as they leave their school each day or at the end of their schooling for that matter? Clearly students will see the space where they acquired and honed their literacy and numeracy skills, the place where elements of sport and recreation were learned and, for the lucky ones, where good and lasting friendships outnumbered fractured and lost relationships. Other students no doubt will see the windows and walls as symbols of the institution where they were banned from wearing certain hairstyles and hair colours or various items of jewellery. Still others will see the institution as a time and a place where they were fodder for bullies; both teacher and fellow student alike. Others may see their time at school as the time when their education was interrupted.

The literature tells us that schools, through their temporal structuring accentuate the subordinate status of young people. Age-grading, which Wyness (2000) notes is built into most education systems within advanced societies, links biological development to educational growth. The increments of progression, so defined, are prescribed through the set curriculum which has been constructed by adults and premised upon adult understandings of child development.

Temporal structuring coupled with the local constraining force of the school timetable, which governs the day-to-day activities and the use of time and space for young people, presents as problematic the notion of young people as active social agents in the school setting.

And, as if to reinforce the subordination of young people in schools, students are forced to wear a dress code which adults do *not* wear, and which students readily reject outside of school hours. Often the school uniform remains unchanged for a decade or more, and apart from girls' dresses being unfashionable, they are usually loose fitting thus masking the sexuality of the wearer. This points to the schooling of students primarily as cognitive beings with scant regard paid to students as active agents in their own right; fully human and fully participating in and shaping the social milieu of which they are a part (Wyness, 2000).

Schools are sites of contradiction for students (Smith, 2000a) because they espouse concern for students' rights and participation on the one hand and yet, as Cullingford (cited in Wyness, 2000, p.91) puts it, 'schools remain the worlds of teachers in which children are temporary guests'. Similarly, students are taught, and expected to be independent, and yet childhood and adolescence in the school setting remains a tightly managed process. Bessant et al. (1998) contend that the regulation of childhood and adolescence is a contemporary phenomenon that is increasing in its intensity.

### **A Teacher View**

What do we see when we snatch a moment to look at the world of today's young person sitting in a typical Lutheran School classroom? We see young people in various states of engagement with the material at hand and we see teachers, good teachers, tinkering with the content here and fine-tuning the pedagogy there, in order to make the learning situation as palatable, even interesting, as possible for the students. Good teachers do this day after day knowing all of the time that they are but one influence in the lives of young people and sometimes even rueing the fact that they are one of the influences rejected by a student in their care. Teachers can sense when some of their students are using their imaginary remote control 'clickers' to change the channel.

Researchers tell us that the students of today are exposed to more information than at any other time in history (Beare, 2001), indeed they are drowning in information. Further, the students of today are the most sexualized group of young people in history (Goldman & Bradley, 2001). And our young people are fast losing the opportunity to experience what we used to call childhood (Wyness, 2000).

### **Media and Marketing Windows**

Traditionally, young people were educated through fairy tales, folk traditions, myths, and children's literature, as well as institutions like family, schools, and church. Today, media culture has replaced traditional institutions as major instruments of socialisation, and young people often appropriate role models and material for identity from media sources (Furlong & Cartmel, 1997) rather than from their parents and teachers. In this 'media' youth culture, popular music, television, film, and video and computer games 'create new idols, aspirations, and artifacts that profoundly influence the thought and behaviour of contemporary youth' (Kellner, 1997, p.85).

### **Television, video games and music**

In Postman's (1982) polemic on childhood, he looked at how children's play has changed through the introduction of electronic media. It was noted, for example, that television and advertising has opened up the hitherto adult worlds of sex, violence and economics to children. Children, according to this argument, have become more adult-like because the separate world of children's play has been invaded by mass media that addresses the child as a calculating consumer.

Since the introduction of the Saturday morning 'kidvid' phenomenon, that is, Saturday morning shows interspersed with heavy doses of advertising, the advertising to young people has not been restricted to those products directly 'purchased' or consumed by young people. Indeed, according to Gill (cited in Ellen 1995, p.452), a child now 'buys' products and services that were at one time targeted solely to adults, such as televisions, VCR's, personal computers, and even cars.

Television, as a world of immediacy and simultaneity, puts children on a par with adults, in that information about the world that was previously monopolised by parents and teachers is now accessible to children. Television, as it were, extinguishes any secrets or privileged knowledge that adults once had to prop up

their hegemonic power over the young (Wyness, 2000). That is, the crucial distance to maintain power between the adult-world and child-world can no longer be sustained.

In a recent content analysis of American television, 56% of all programs were found to contain sexual content, with the average American adolescent viewing nearly 14,000 sexual references per year (American Academy of Pediatrics, 2001). It is not surprising then to find that although early sexual activity may be encouraged by a variety of factors, the media are believed to play a significant role (Ward, 2002). In television, and music videos, sexual messages are becoming more explicit in dialogue, lyrics, and behaviour (Van Evra, 1998).

Advertising also contains a significant amount of sexual imagery. Indeed, sex is used to sell the most common products from shampoo to music, yet when children and adolescents respond to the cues and become sexually active, society seems to blame young people, not the advertisers (Lumby, 1997). Further, heavy exposure to media sex is associated with an increased perception of the frequency of sexual activity in the real world (Buerkel-Rothfuss & Strouse, 1993). As a result, television may function as a kind of 'super-peer', normalizing these perceived adult behaviours for young people.

Depictions of violence also play a part in the shaping of young people's lives. According to Hinds (2000), the lives of children have never been so saturated with violence. It is estimated that a child born today will see, on television alone, 200,000 acts of violence, including 16,000 murders, before turning 18 (Hinds, 2000, p.226). Despite the violence portrayed on television, it is violent video games in particular that have been singled out for their effects on young people. Grossman (cited in Hinds, 2000, p.227), asserts that violent video games, desensitise players to violence by associating violence with pleasure, conditioning them to 'kill' reflexively, and rewarding marksmanship.

### **Magazines**

Body image, the central focus of girls' magazines, is usually associated with adolescents and young women in society. However, there is now research that suggests that pre-pubescent children are becoming concerned about their weight and developing obsessive dieting habits along with food refusal. Anorexia Nervosa is third on the list of most common illnesses among Australian girls aged 15-19, with children as young as 8 years presenting as patients (Milne-Home & Milne-Home, 2003).

### **Technology and the World Wide Web**

Adolescence is a time when young people are exploring a range of interests and searching for their identity, and the Internet offers a relatively safe avenue for exploration of many areas of interest, including sexuality (Goldman & Bradley, 2001; Tell, 2000). However, many adults do not see it that way. They worry about the time young people spend on the Web, in isolation from the family. They worry about the easy accessibility of pornographic, violent, or other potentially dangerous material on the Web. They worry about the Web-based discussion groups their children use and the relationships they may form with strangers, especially when they lead to face-to-face meeting (Tell, 2000; Van Evra, 1998).

### **A Peep at Pornography**

Despite the obvious advantages that the internet affords young people it does have its downsides. It has, for example, been estimated that there are as many as 100,000 pornographic Web sites (Rice Hughes, cited in Mitchell, Finkelhor & Wolak, 2003, p.332). Research shows us that in one survey more than 80% of Australian boys aged 16 to 17 years have visited hard core Internet sites (Australian IT, accessed online 24/4/2003). It is difficult to know what percentage of young people under the age of 16 access pornographic sites because younger children were not included in the study for ethical reasons. However, active searching for pornography is not the only avenue by which children can find it; they can encounter it involuntarily as well.

A recent U.S.A. national study of young people aged 10 to 17 and their caretakers, conducted by Mitchell and Finkelhor and Wolak (2003), found that 25% of the youth who used the Internet regularly had one or more unwanted exposure to sexual pictures while online in the past year. Further, 73% of these exposures occurred while the youth were searching or surfing the Internet, and 27% happened while opening e-mail or clicking on links in e-mail or Instant Messages. Most of the imagery was simply of naked persons, but 32% showed people having sex, and 7% involved violence (Mitchell et al. 2003, p. 340).

Lancaster (2003, p.334), notes that pornographic sites provide the 'best-organised, best-illustrated, and most user-friendly material on the net', making it relatively simple for young people to access pornography on the Web, should they choose. However, explicit sex sites are sometimes programmed to make them difficult to exit. In fact, in some sites the exit functions take a viewer into other sexually explicit sites. Indeed Mitchell et al. (2003) found that this so called 'mouse trapping' happened in one third of distressing incidents.

### **Youth Culture**

Peer group pressure is an important agent in shaping the life and attitudes of young people. However, what has been termed popular culture, with its power to deconstruct and reconstruct attitudes, is seen to be significant in peer pressure (Goodman & Dretzin, 2001, accessed online 26/4/2003).

The corporate production of 'Kunderculture' for children (Steinberg & Kincheloe (1997), and the construction and marketing of 'Cool' for teenagers both generates and harvests a multi-billion dollar market annually (Goodman & Dretzin, 2001). Kunderculture, driven by Disney, Mattel, Hasbro, Warner Brothers, and McDonalds, with its host of products for children including toiletries, designer clothes, electronics, foods, and even travel programs (Ellen, 1995), is at its most powerful when it produces pleasure among consumers. That is, Kunderculture is primarily 'a pedagogy of pleasure' (Steinberg & Kincheloe, 1997, p.5).

Adolescents too are the targets of huge advertising programs designed to elicit consumption. Indeed a typical American teenager will process over 3,000 discrete advertisements in a single day, and 10 million by the time they are 18 years old (Goodman & Dretzin, 2001). Just five enormous companies sell all of youth culture, namely, Newscorp, Disney, Viacom, Universal Vivendi, and AOL/Time Warner. In order to retain market share, these companies do not just wait for a market to happen, they *create* both the product and the market. The 'midriff' archetype promoted by mega-star Britney Spears, is a case in point. Indeed, intensive human research designed to elicit the next wave of 'cool' products is an ongoing priority because, ironically, once a product is mass marketed it is no longer 'cool' (Goodman & Dretzin, 2001).

### **Looking Through Windows on Leadership**

A question, do the windows through which our students view the world, match the windows on the world that we construct in and through our schools? The literature suggests that there is a mismatch, possibly even a mismatch that is increasing with time.

The change in children's access to adult knowledge about the world and the changes in the nature of childhood and adolescence that it produces, have undermined the conceptual, curricular, and managerial bases on which schooling has been organised (Steinberg & Kincheloe, 1997). Currently the school curriculum, for example, is organised as a continuum of experience developmentally sequenced as if children learn about the world in school in progressive increments. Sometimes this is referred to as the 'nested curriculum'.

We cannot protect our children from the knowledge of the world that hyper-reality has made available to them. We must develop education, parenting skills, and social institutions that will address this cultural revolution in a way that teaches our children to make sense of the chaos of information in hyper-reality. In this context school becomes not so much an institution of information delivery as a hermeneutical site, that is, a place where meaning is made, where understanding and interpretation are engendered.

Many teachers, and Principals, would claim that this happens in schools now. However I would argue that much of what happens in schools and therefore what passes as education is better described as training. We train young people to count, to spell, to write. We train young people in the laws of physics and mathematics and the practical skills of technology. But I take education to mean much more than training, education is the sum of all the forces which nourish the growth of the individual self.

Education has, I believe, suffered from the assumption that it's meaning, and therefore its application, derives from the Latin verb, '*educere*', to lead out, whereas in fact the root Latin verb was '*educare*'. To nourish, that is, education ought to be about the nourishment and growth of the individual in society and all that this means. Further, I understand education to be about life, for life, and to be lifelong. Which means education must be about being human, for the good of humanity, and as our theology informs us for time and eternity. This point Dorothy Heathcote (touted as the world's best contemporary teacher),

underscores so strongly when she says the following; 'Everyday when I associate with teachers and children the same idea niggles me. What am I doing at this present moment within my society which is of any use? How will what happens in this time contribute to this individual, this group of people, my community, my nation, the world of people and objects?' (Heathcote, 1985, p.171).

What then should be added to contemporary schooling in order to achieve education? In my view what is missing is the political, the philosophical, the ethical dimensions of life, a deeper emphasis on the arts, and the chance for children to be children. Education is much more than teaching subjects and information and knowledge, education is about struggling with the hurts of humanity, it's about wrestling meaning from the grip of knowledge. Indeed, to be educated is to be, 'ever open to the call of what it means to be deeply human' (Aoki, cited in Young, 2003, p.10).

Our curriculum should resonate with the sense of the lived lives of our contemporary students, and it should resonate with the shared experience of humanity. It should unite the head, the heart, the hands, and the body. We need to focus on the corporeality of education, cognition alone is insufficient. We need our students to be the voice of the voiceless, they must be empowered to name those who are unnamed and to defend the defenseless. We need our students to be givers and not merely takers; to 'love their neighbours as themselves'. We need our students to ache for peace. And so I ask, where are the Amnesty International cell groups in our schools, where is the critique of politics, where is the study of ethics and the rigor of philosophical thought, where are the intentional values programs in our Lutheran schools? Indeed where is the Arts faculty and the chair of philosophy at our 'Australian Lutheran University'?

We give our students work experience, but do we give them political experience, do we give them the chance to explore global morality rather than restrict them to studying the ethics of good accounting? Do we let our students ask the 'futures' questions of 'where might we go' and 'how might we get there'?

Further, we should be wary of elevating the individual beyond the created order. A cursory check of our School and College mission statements reveals the primacy of individuals in our schools; there are of course references to the community but they are located as secondary to the individual. It is proper that we protect the primacy of the individual but what is desperately needed is a return to a full understanding of what it means to be a member of a community and in particular the global community.

This will be difficult to achieve because our consumer society reinforces the notion that we are what we consume, and consumption is about hedonistic individualism. Further, politically we have, as a nation, in recent times been increasingly isolationist and protectionist in our policies and our practice. We protect our borders, we patrol the moat of our 'castle'. We keep leaking boatloads of people outside of our 'moat' which means that these people are primarily not our responsibility. We embrace individual immigrants who can add to our wealth, but we deny others.

What message is all of this conveying to our young people? It suggests to me that Australians are self-important. Australians owe it to themselves to protect their individual privileged position. And that the lives and wealth of individual Australians are more important than the lives of boat people or the lives of 'collateral' in Iraq for example.

We must never reify such a position in our Lutheran Schools by elevating the individual above the importance of others or another. Our theology informs our care for others and our practice should follow our theology. The extent of our care can be measured by the care we give to the least one: the least gifted, the least responsive, even the least Christian (see Matthew 25:31-40).

### **A Window on Leadership in Lutheran Schools**

Sometimes when you position yourself at just the right angle you can see your own reflection in a window. For years now I have been listening to the recounts of colleagues who have undertaken a trip to visit American Lutheran schools. And in all of these years I haven't heard of one single educational innovation adopted in our schools as a result of these trips. My hunch is that we go overseas only to see our own reflections in the windows of American Lutheran schools. This of itself may be encouraging and reassuring, even cathartic, but I think we are looking in the wrong places, looking through the wrong windows, if we seek to do education better. I think that there is a cogent argument that says we should consider a visit to Zimbabwe, for example. Or maybe undertake a three week stint with Red Cross in Angola or Liberia where we can see clearly, very clearly, because there are no windows: indeed in some

places there are no schools! Or visit Sierra Leone, the most dangerous place for children on earth, or Afghanistan and see the effects on women and their children now that ultra conservative clerics hold sway. Or visit a sweatshop in any of a thousand different places and see the wealth of the wealthy being built on the back of low-wage workers.

And I think we look in the wrong books to inform our educational leadership. We have more than enough Sergiovannis and Hargreaves and Starratts and Fullans. We already have enough ways to help us to 'join the dots' of leadership by numbers. We know the technical stuff, we know how to be administrators and managers and how to follow the formulae of leadership. What we need more than anything else is material that feeds us as educational leaders. We do not need more 'moral leadership' (Sergiovanni, 1992), rather, we need more moral nourishment [*educare*]. We need material that helps us plumb the depths of humanity. We need Neil Postman's polemics, and Foucault, and Singer on ethics, and De Botton's philosophy, and Glover's 'moral history of the twentieth century', and Naomi Klein's cutting commentary on the globalization debate. And we need cartoonists like Leunig, and Nicholson. These works have little to do with training and schooling but everything to do with education.

Finally we need to reposition educational leadership. Education like medicine, sport and other major social agencies is politicised. The current economic rationalist approach too many areas of government has seen a rise in the frequency and extent of calls for transparency and proof, often in the form of test results, that government money is being spent in schools to effect better outcomes for children. The approach is appealing to many sectors in society. Indeed the appeal is somewhat like the appeal of new plasma TV screens. They have a sharp focus, we are sure of the testing and research behind them and more people can view the effects (accountability). However the screens are still two-dimensional and the human touch is still missing.

We are forced to measure because money is the other measure in return. But we must measure what is valuable in education and not just those things which have economic value. To this end the rationale for education as economic rationalism shifts education from a cultural activity to an economic activity. We should work hard to reposition education as cultural capital.

### **The Window of Opportunity**

I have outlined a view or two concerning contemporary education as a concept and a practice but I have deliberately not elaborated on the detailed translation of these views in the local Lutheran School or College setting. This role, I contend, must be worked out, with 'fear and trembling', by each individual educational leader. We must work towards, and celebrate our difference, not train for sameness.

Further, I hold that leadership does not reside in the schools of Educational Leadership, or the halls of Government, rather, it resides in the hearts of people. It is an art not a science.

At no time in the last thirty years, have I seen or heard a group of educational leaders more suited for the challenges that I see ahead, than the present group of Principals gathered here at conference. Our diversity is expanding and with this comes richer life stories. We have increasing numbers of female leaders, and leaders who are other than the traditional married male with four children. And we have leaders, who know what pain, and suffering, and struggle, and abuse is, and whose crying resonates with the brokenhearted in our schools and in our world.

Colleagues, the final window is the window of opportunity. As leaders of schools, Lutheran schools, we have, I believe, an enormous responsibility; a responsibility which arises by virtue of our enormous ability to respond to a world which is fractured. And we must not back away; Jesus didn't.

Loyd R. Fyffe

28<sup>th</sup> August 2003

## REFERENCES LIST

- Australian Bureau of Statistics. 1999. Household and family projections Australia 1996 to 2021, *Catalogue No. 4119.0*, Australian Bureau of Statistics, Canberra.
- Australian Bureau of Statistics. 2002. Marriages and divorces, Australia, *Catalogue No. 3310.0*, Australian Bureau of Statistics, Canberra.
- Adler, P. & Adler, P. 1998. *Peer power: preadolescent culture and identity*. New Jersey: Rutgers University Press.
- American Academy of Paediatrics. 2001. Sexuality, contraception, and the media. *Paediatrics* 107(1) 191-198.
- Australian IT. 2003, March 3. *Most boys view porn*. Retrieved April 24, 2003, from <http://australianit.news.com.au/>
- Beare, H. 2001. *Creating the future school*. London: RoutledgeFalmer.
- Bessant, J. & Sercombe, H. & Watts, R. 1998. *Youth studies: an Australian perspective*. South Melbourne: Longman.
- Bingham, C. & Crockett, L. 2002. Longitudinal adjustment patterns of boys and girls experiencing early, middle, and late sexual intercourse. In G. Adams (Ed.), *Adolescent development, the essential readings* (pp. 106-133). Massachusetts: Blackwell Publishers.
- Brooks-Gunn, J. & Schley, S. & Hardy, J. 2000. Marriage and the baby carriage: historical change and intergenerational continuity in early parenthood. In L. Crockett, & R. Silbereisen (Eds.), *Negotiating adolescence in times of social change* (pp. 36-57). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Buerkel-Rothfuss, N. & Strouse, J. 1993. Media exposure and perceptions of sexual behaviors: the cultivation hypothesis moves to the bedroom. In B. Greenberg, & J. Brown, & N. Buerkel-Rothfuss (Eds), *Media, sex, and the adolescent* (pp. 225-247). New Jersey: Hampton Press.
- Cobb, N. 1998. *Adolescence: continuity, change, and diversity, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed*. London: Mayfield Publishing Company.
- Coleman, J. 2000. Young people in Britain at the beginning of a new century. *Children and society*, 14, 230-242.
- Coleman, C. & Hendry, L. 1999. *The nature of adolescence, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed*. London: Routledge.
- Edgar, D. 2001. *The patchwork nation: re-thinking government – re-building community*. Sydney: HarperCollins.
- Ellen, W. 1995. The commercialization of youth: Channel One in context. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 76(6), 448-455.
- Furlong, A. & Cartmel, F. 1997. *Sociology and social change*. Philadelphia: Open University Press.
- Giroux, H. 1998. Teenage sexuality, body politics, and the pedagogy of display. In J. Epstein (Ed.), *Youth culture: identity in a postmodern world* (pp. 24 - 55). Oxford: Blackwell Publishers.
- Goldman, J. & Bradley, G 2001. Sexuality education across the lifecycle in the new millennium. *Sex Education*, 1(3), 197-218.

- Goodman, B. & Dretzin, R. (Executive Producers). 2001, February 27. *Merchants of cool* [Television broadcast]. Transcript retrieved April 26, 2003, from <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/cool/etc/script.html>
- Good News Bible. 1976. Canberra: The Bible Society in Australia.
- Heathcote, D. 1985. The authentic teacher and the future. In L. Johnson, & C. O'Neill (Eds.), *Dorothy Heathcote: collected writings on education and drama*. London: Hutchinson.
- Heaven, P. 1996. *Adolescent health: the role of individual differences*. London: Routledge.
- Hinds, M. 2000. Violent kids can we solve the problem? *Social Education*, 64(4), 225-231.
- Kellner, D. 1997. Bevis and Butt-Head: no future for modern youth. In S. Steinberg & J. Kincheloe (Eds.), *Kinderculture: the corporate construction of childhood* (pp. 85-101). Oxford: Westview Press.
- Lancaster, R. 2003. *The trouble with nature: sex in science and popular culture*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Lee, N. 2001. *Childhood and society: growing up in an age of uncertainty*. Philadelphia: Open University Press.
- Lumby, C. 1997. *Bad girls: the media, sex and feminism in the '90's*. St. Leonards, N.S.W. Australia: Allen & Unwin.
- Maley, B. 1996. *Wedlock and wellbeing: what marriage means for adults and children*. Sydney: Centre for Independent Studies.
- Milne-Home, J. & Milne-Home, A. 2003. Body image and eating behaviour among students in Sydney's North West: body image and the eat-25 survey report. Retrieved April 27, 2003, from <http://www.aare.edu.au/>
- Mitchell, K & Finkelhor, D. & Wolak, J. 2003. The exposure of youth to unwanted sexual material on the Internet: a national survey of risk, impact, and prevention. *Youth & Society*, 34(3), 330-356.
- Postman, N. 1982. *The disappearance of childhood*. New York: Delacorte Press.
- Seiffge-Krenke, I. 1998. *Adolescent's health: a developmental perspective*. New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates Inc.
- Sergiovanni, T. 1992. *Moral leadership: getting to the heart of school improvement*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Smith, R. 2000a. Whose childhood? The politics of homework. *Children & Society*, 14, 316-325.
- Smith, R. 2000b. Order and disorder: the contradictions of childhood. *Children & Society*, 14, 3-10.
- Steinberg, S. & Kincheloe, J. 1997. No more secrets – kinderculture, information saturation, and the postmodern child. In S. Steinberg, & J. Kincheloe (Eds.), *Kinderculture: the corporate construction of childhood* (pp. 1-30). Oxford: Westview Press.
- Stewart, C. 2003, July 26-27. The secret life of us. *The Weekend Australian*, pp. 19, 22.
- Tell, C. 2000. Generation what? Connecting with today's youth. *Educational Leadership: Alexandria*, 57(4), 8-13.
- Van Evra, J. 1998. *Television and child development, 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed*. New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Ward, M. 2002. Does television exposure affect emerging adults' attitudes and assumptions about sexual relationships? Correlational and experimental confirmation. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, 31(1), 1-15.

Williams, J. & Currie, C. 2000. Self-esteem and physical development in early adolescence: pubertal timing and body image. *Journal of Early Adolescence*, 20(2), 129-149.

Wise, S. 2003. Family structure, child outcomes and environmental mediators. An overview of the development in diverse families study. *Research Paper No.30*. Melbourne: Australian Institute of Family Studies.

Wyness, M. 2000. *Contesting childhood*. London: Falmer

Young, D. 2003. Reflections on teaching as theatrical and artistic performance. *IDEA/ATR Journal (forthcoming)*.