Achieving Australia
as an Inclusive Learning Society

A Report on Future Directions for Lifelong Learning in Australia

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Foreword

I am grateful to Adult Learning Australia for providing me with the opportunity to spend several months researching and reflecting on lifelong learning in Australia and overseas, and sharing ideas with Australians in all States of the Commonwealth. I am particularly grateful to the Executive Director of ALA, Ron Anderson, for the strong support he has given to this project throughout all stages and to all those who sent me their views on the questions raised in the discussion paper circulated last December.

Learning throughout life in contemporary Australian society is a complex and pervasive subject. In order to make this project manageable, I decided to focus on four key aspects: learners, communities, technology, and the workplace. This orientation is reflected in the five pillars of a learning society discussed in this report. Several other subjects flow out of this framework.

In adopting this approach I recognise that I have not done justice to the roles of other important stakeholders, in particular schools, VET institutions, and universities. Their key roles in a 21st century learning society merits a separate study - preferably one that looks across the education sectors in a systemic and learner-centred way.

I believe that a serious national discussion now on lifelong learning and building Australia as an inclusive learning society would be particularly timely. While lifelong learning, with a few exceptions, has not received the attention in Australia that this concept warrants, there are splendid examples of initiatives across Australia that could benefit other communities and their citizens if ways existed to build on this growing foundation of ideas and experience.

The challenge for Australian society is to promote awareness and understanding of the relevance and value of learning throughout life for key national social, cultural, and economic objectives, and then to forge a national framework to encourage collaboration and partnership across many sectors in progressing this key 21st century competence.

Other leading OECD countries are doing this, and Australia will fall behind at our peril. As Deming observed: learning is not compulsory, but neither is survival.

Peter Kearns

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Executive Summary

The Challenge

Australia in the first decade of the 21st century faces the challenge of a new era marked by the radical impact of global forces, rampant technologies, an exponential pace of change, and considerable discontinuity with the overturning of established paradigms – including those for human resource development.

In the post-industrial, post-modern society, providing opportunities for learning throughout life for all has become an imperative need – for social, economic, civic, and cultural reasons – and a challenge for all stakeholders in Australian society requiring fresh thinking and new approaches.

In this context Adult Learning Australia (ALA) commissioned the author of this report to direct a project on future directions for lifelong learning in Australia. This project involved a discussion paper released in December 2004, consultations in all States during March/April 2005, and a National Conversation on Lifelong Learning conducted through the ALA website.

The Key Finding

The key finding from the consultations and research was that lifelong learning is poorly understood in Australia, and that this acts as a barrier to concerted partnership action by all stakeholders in progressing opportunities for learning throughout life for all Australians, in many contexts. This results in deleterious social, cultural, and economic effects, and will be a barrier to Australia's development under 21st century conditions as an inclusive and successful society unless addressed in a strategic and collaborative way.

The Contemporary 21st Century View of Lifelong Learning

The contemporary 21st century concept of lifelong learning adopted by OECD, the European Union, World Bank, and leading OECD countries is that lifelong learning involves all forms of learning and occurs in many contexts in society. It therefore spans formal, non-formal and informal modes of learning with the home and workplace increasingly important as contexts for learning. The impact of technology is increasing the influence of informal and self-directed learning and providing new ways to extend learning opportunities. Learning to learn is the key 21st century competence. How to connect the various forms of learning in coherent strategies is a central challenge.

The Context and Drivers

The discussion paper identified a set of six key drivers which are impacting on Australian society and making learning throughout life for all an imperative requirement.

These drivers are:

> globalisation, knowledge economy, demography, technology, changes in work and labour markets, and sustaining communities.

There was broad agreement in the consultations on the centrality of these drivers. Social imperatives flowing from these drivers were raised in consultations, including the impact of diversity, shifts in lifestyle and work/life balance, and the implications of "big picture" global issues.

The implications of demographic shifts with the ageing of the population and workforce was seen as especially important. There was substantial agreement that the impact of these drivers makes lifelong learning for all an imperative requirement and challenge for Australian society.

What are Other Countries Doing?

The report provides an overview of action taken by the United Kingdom, Germany, Canada, the Nordic countries, and the European Union (EU). It is EU policy that all Member countries should have coherent and comprehensive lifelong learning strategies by 2006. These initiatives are setting evolving international benchmarks for good practice that Australia cannot afford to lag. Canada and Germany provide interesting examples of action taken in federal systems, while the Nordic countries provide the most advanced portraits of a learning society.

The approach taken by the Nordic countries is discussed in Appendix 2 where their strong performance in a range of education and knowledge economy indicators is shown.

Five Key Dimensions in Building Australia as an Inclusive Learning Society

This report is focused around five key building blocks for achieving Australia as an inclusive learning society with opportunities for learning throughout life for all.

These building blocks are:

1. empowering individuals as motivated and capable lifelong learners;

2. sustaining and transforming communities through learning;

3. using technology to extend learning environments and transform the way we learn;

4. developing the workplace as a key learning environment to underpin economic objectives;

5. extending and connecting partnerships and networks to build Australia as an inclusive learning society.

While action along each of these pillars of a learning society is needed, progress will also depend critically on the extent to which connections can be made between these pillars in building comprehensive and holistic strategies for learning in many contexts. Partnerships and networks will need to work across the whole learning spectrum.

Concerted partnership action will enable the wider benefits of learning to be achieved across broad areas of social and economic activity including health, welfare, supporting families and communities, and maintaining skill in the workforce. Such concerted action will build social, identity, and human capital in Australian society, and in communities able to innovate and be creative.

Empowering Individuals as Lifelong Learners

The central feature of an inclusive learning society is that all citizens will be empowered and enabled as self-directed learners to have the motivation and capability to continue learning and developing throughout life. Learning throughout life both maintains employability and adds to quality of life and personal fulfilment. Learning as a way of being is a building block of a successful 21st century society.

A range of actions is necessary to progress these objectives, including ensuring that all achieve essential 21st century literacy. While this includes traditional concepts of literacy and numeracy, it goes beyond these in including essential life and employability skills and attributes which contribute to "a successful life and a well-functioning society."[1]

Innovative concepts are emerging around the world to progress this fundamental feature of a learning society. These include the phases of life approach adopted for the German Strategy for Lifelong Learning, the personalised learning concept being tested in the UK, and various aspects of school reform in Australia and overseas. These developments move in the direction of the learner-centred

[1] Rychen & Salganik 2003.

foundation for lifelong learning. More research is needed on the pedagogical implications of lifelong learning in progressing this fundamental aspiration.

The Community Role

Building community learning partnerships of various kinds is a key strategy for achieving Australia as an inclusive learning society. A spectrum of models for progressing this objective have been developed in Australia and overseas which now need to be extended to communities across Australia. How best to do this lies at the heart of the lifelong learning challenge for Australian society.

Local government councils are key stakeholders in collaborative community learning, and will be increasingly key players in learning community initiatives. Existing examples, such as the Hume Global Learning Village, Yarra Ranges Learning Communities, and initiatives in Marion and Salisbury demonstrate what can be achieved with vision and leadership.

Information and communication technology is opening new ways to build social capital and community, and should be harnessed with community learning strategies. It is likely that schools, universities, VET, ACE, and civil society overall will become increasingly active in progressing community learning partnerships, but concerted strategies will be needed to harness these resources for community learning.

The Role of Technology

There has been a persistent theme in international discussions of the impact of information and communication technology on learning, that technology will transform the way we learn. This has not happened yet, and the full potential of technology to progress learning throughout the community has not yet been achieved.

While the focus of policy up to now has been on access objectives in addressing the digital divide so that all Australians achieve digital literacy, a new stage of development will focus on harnessing the full potential of technology for learning

The Workplace and Economy

The impact of the global knowledge economy has enhanced the significance of the workplace as a key learning environment with an enhanced significance for industry in adapting to change, generating new knowledge, maintaining skill levels, and building a capacity for continuous innovation. At the same time, technology and innovative approaches to e-learning, is providing new ways to

strengthen workplace learning in strategic ways with closer links to overall business strategy and objectives.

Demographic change and the ageing of the workforce, shifts in community values and lifestyle, the growth of casual and part-time work, and other drivers discussed in Chapter 2 are requiring new approaches to developing the human resources of industry, and maintaining the skill levels and motivation of the workforce. In this context, industry is a key stakeholder and beneficiary in building a learning culture in Australia, and should be an active partner. While a number of good practice examples exist, industry overall is not sufficiently engaged in this vital investment in Australia's future, and appears to be mainly focused on short-term issues of skill shortages.

A wide range of issues need to be addressed, including a more strategic approach to business philanthropy.

Integrating Learning and Skill Strategies

21st century conditions have brought to the fore the question of how best to integrate learning and skill strategies in a context of constant change. Implications of the learning/skill nexus are discussed in the report. Some systems have made structural changes to foster an enhanced interface. These include the roles of the UK Learning and Skills Council, Tasmania's Learning and Skills Authority, and Victoria's Learning and Employment Skills Commission. Aspects such as pedagogical implications are being addressed. These efforts need to be supported by a co-ordinated knowledge base on lifelong learning.

Growing Partnerships and Networks

A learning society may be seen as a society comprising a rich web of overlapping and interacting networks and partnerships. The impact of ICT is creating new ways to build interacting networks across Australia, and a diverse range of community and virtual learning partnerships have emerged in Australia and overseas. These include social partnerships, community learning partnerships, ICT enabled networks, and learning regions.

A key issue is how best to extend community learning partnerships and networks to all communities across Australia in ways that make this process creative and value added. This will involve strengthening the learning brokerage role. Linking to international networks is another key area for development.

Building the Knowledge Base

The progress of lifelong learning in Australia has hampered by the absence of a developed and co-ordinated knowledge base. Lifelong learning has not been a research priority for Australia, and existing knowledge is fragmented across a range of Commonwealth and State sites and research centres without a dedicated national focal point existing. This contrasts with the situation in countries such as the UK and Canada. Options to address this need are discussed.

The Role of Adult and Community Education

Progressing lifelong learning and building Australia as an inclusive learning society will require mainstreaming the role of adult and community education (ACE) in holistic strategies which integrate social, capital, educational, and economic objectives. This is likely to be accompanied, as OECD advocates, by a shift from the current concept of adult education to that of adult learning in many contexts and forms, in a more systemic learner-centred perspective.

Building a learning society will require better recognition of the key role of informal learning in many contexts, and the role of adult learning in building social, identity, and human capital. An integrated and holistic approach to the development of Australia's human resources will best be progressed through replacing the current sectoral divisions by an adult learning continuum which incorporates personal, community, and economic development in ways that recognises interdependencies, and which build synergies through holistic strategies. These important questions merit early discussion.

The Way Forward

A critical need exists to address the key themes emerging from this study through partnerships and collaboration, and a shared vision of Australia as an inclusive learning society.

Foremost, is the low level of awareness and understanding of the significance of lifelong learning for 21st century Australia that needs to be addressed through a properly resourced national campaign for learning. The outcomes of this campaign should provide a platform for extending collaboration and partnership, involving all stakeholders, in progressing the five paths to an inclusive learning society discussed in this report.

While many examples of creative initiatives exist across Australia, these need to be supported by more comprehensive and coherent policies to support learning throughout life in many contexts. Five immediate priorities are suggested. The question of a national framework for lifelong learning was frequently raised in our

consultations, posing the question of what kind of framework. Some options are suggested.

Building policies to encourage and support learning throughout life for all Australians should be seen as a necessary strategic investment in Australia's future, meriting the active support of all stakeholders. Much remains to be done. Long-term perspectives and a shared vision will be needed to drive this process of partnership and collaboration in achieving Australia as an inclusive and successful learning society.

1. THE PROJECT

How this ALA project has attempted to identify future directions for lifelong learning in Australia

Australia in the first decade of the 21st century faces the challenge of a new era marked by the radical impact of global forces, rampant technologies, an exponential pace of change, and considerable discontinuity with the overturning of established paradigms. In this post-industrial, post-modern society, providing opportunities for learning throughout life for all has become an imperative need — for social, economic, civic, and cultural reasons — and a challenge for all stakeholders in Australian society requiring fresh thinking and new approaches.

In this context Adult Learning Australia (ALA) commissioned the author of this report to direct a project on future directions for lifelong learning in Australia as a contribution to a national dialogue on the question of how best to build Australia as an inclusive learning society with lifelong learning opportunities for all.

This project involved the following action:

- a discussion paper titled *Towards a Learning Revolution in Australia* was prepared and released for comment in December 2004;
- consultations were held across Australia in all States in March/April 2005 focused on questions built into the discussion paper;
- an online conversation through the ALA website focused on five key messages;
- this report has been prepared as the outcome of the project.

The discussion paper adopted a forward-looking orientation based on four possible scenarios to progress lifelong learning in Australia in the context of six key drivers which are interacting and impacting on Australian society to make learning throughout life an imperative need. These drivers, which are discussed in Chapter 2, are globalisation, knowledge society and economy, demographic change, technology, changes in work and the labour market, and sustaining communities.

In this context, the following scenarios were suggested as a basis for discussion:

1. Civil society and local government in the driving seat.

2. Government support for selected local and regional initiatives.

3. Comprehensive and integrated State and Territory initiatives.

4. Development of a national framework to build Australia as an inclusive and innovative learning society.

My consultations across Australia led me to conclude that a different approach to future directions for lifelong learning in Australia should be taken which recognised the many stakeholders with an interest, and the complexity of the forces driving the growing demand for lifelong learning, but which also focused action on a few key themes. This approach was developed through the online conversation built into this project.

For these reasons, I have adopted the structure outlined in Chapter 3 with five key pillars, and which recognises the complex interaction of civil society, government and market in progressing lifelong learning in Australia.

These key themes relate to:

1. empowering individuals through learning;

2. sustaining and transforming communities through learning;

3. using technology to transform the way we learn;

4. developing the workplace as a key learning environment to underpin economic objectives;

5. extending and linking partnerships and networks to build a learning society;

The chapters of this report discuss each of these themes.

A central theme in this report relates to the need to build learning partnerships in many forms and contexts, and to extend and link learning networks in progressing Australia as an inclusive learning society. How to involve all stakeholders in such partnerships and networks is a key issue.

A National Conversation on Lifelong Learning

The five key themes outlined above became the basis for a national conversation on lifelong learning conducted through the ALA website. Each of these themes was posted on the ALA website as Key Messages for a two week period with comments invited.

The Concept of Lifelong Learning

The concept of lifelong learning has been defined in a number of ways. Useful definitions have been given by the European Commission and the International Academy of Education Task Force.

> *(lifelong learning is) all learning activity undertaken throughout life, with the aim of improving knowledge, skills, and competences within a personal, civic, social and/or employment-related perspective.*
>
> European Commission 2001, Making a European Area of Lifelong Learning a Reality, p.9.

> *Life-long learning generally defines a broad set of beliefs, aims and strategies around the central tenet that learning opportunities available over the whole lifespan and accessible on a widespread basis should be key attributes of modern societies.*
>
> Report of the International Academy of Education Taskforce[2]

These complementary definitions provide a broad concept of lifelong learning, and draw attention to key attributes which are taken up in this report.

In a society with these attributes, learning is lifelong and lifewide with learning opportunities available to all.

Learning occurs in many contexts (including the home, workplace, club, sporting fields), and involves formal, non-formal, and informal modes of learning.

Lifelong Learning is Poorly Understood

We found in our consultations across Australia a consensus in all meetings that the concept and significance of lifelong learning is poorly understood. Often, lifelong learning is seen as a matter of access to formal education courses rather than the contemporary concept of lifelong/lifewide learning discussed in this chapter. Lifelong learning is seldom sees as a survival issue.

[2] Cited in Tuijnmann 1999, p.1.

This lack of awareness and understanding will be a major barrier to Australian development under 21st century conditions unless addressed. It prevents many people from continuing learning throughout life, both to maintain employability and enhance quality of life; and is a barrier to numbers of employers giving priority to workplace learning. Business, governments, communities, and individuals are all stakeholders in necessary collaborative action to address this critical barrier to Australia's development.

The Vision

The concepts of lifelong learning set out above leads to a vision of Australia as an inclusive learning society with opportunities to learn throughout life available for all citizens.

As noted by the European Commission, learning throughout life underpins personal, civic, social, and economic objectives and contexts. This means that it is necessary to work towards holistic and integrated strategies for learning throughout life in which synergies are achieved between comprehensive strategies across these contexts.

This will require considerable cultural change, and the fostering of values and arrangements that encourage and support learning in many contexts.

Formal, Non-formal and Informal Learning

A key aspect of the concept adopted in this report is that lifelong learning involves all forms of learning, and so spans formal, non-formal and informal modes of learning.

- **Formal learning** is provided by education institutions (schools, colleges, universities) in courses which generally lead to education qualifications.
- **Non-formal learning** mainly involves short courses delivered in many contexts by a range of providers which usually do not lead directly to recognised education qualifications.
- **Informal learning** is related to the direct experience of individuals and occurs throughout life in many contexts. Informal learning is associated with tacit knowledge which individuals build up from experience and the mental models which condition an individual's response to experience. Informal learning is discussed in Chapter 5.

The growing complexity and pace of change of contemporary life means that non-formal learning and informal learning have become increasingly important in the

ways in which individuals, firms, families, and communities adapt to change. This is an aspect of lifelong learning not always given appropriate recognition.

The Range of Types of Learning

In addition to the three forms of learning discussed above, a range of types of learning may be distinguished.

- The Unesco International Commission on Education for the 21st century distinguished learning to know, learning to do, learning to live together, and learning to be.[3]
- Senge distinguished adaptive or survival learning and generative learning.[4]
- Vaill identifies seven types of learning: self-directed learning, creative learning, expressive learning, feeling learning, on-line learning, continual learning, and reflective learning.[5]

While opinions will continue to differ on how best to describe the various types of learning, the views of the UNESCO Commission, Senge, and Vaill have value in drawing attention to the range of forms that learning may take involving cognitive, emotional, creative, and spiritual aspects of the human condition. Empowering people as lifelong learners involves developing a capability in the various types of learning, and understanding of how such learning occurs in various contexts. Learning to learn in many contexts is central to the human condition in the 21st century.

Vaill develops this argument for a holistic approach to learning by asserting that the learning process should embrace the seven types of learning he identifies.[6]

In the context of the dynamic knowledge society and economy, the implications of this argument for all stakeholders are significant.

- Education institutions need to assess the pedagogical implications for their learning strategies in developing holistic approaches.

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3 Unesco 1996.

4 Senge 1990, p.14.

5 Vaill 1996, p.44.

6 The European Commission recognises these objectives in its action plan for Making a European Area of Lifelong Learning a Reality, European Commission, 2001, p.9.

- Employers need to ensure that work arrangements bring the whole person to work and stimulate various types of learning and development.

- All stakeholders should have a constant concern with creative and expressive forms of learning.

Progressing these imperatives will require considerable innovation in forging relationships and partnerships, and innovative forms of interaction between stakeholders — for example, at the VET/ACE interface and in the role of the arts in communities. Learning communities will need to be creative communities.

There is common interest in progressing these imperatives, with potential benefits for all stakeholders through strategies that enhance the various types of learning in enhancing creativity, personal fulfilment, and a capacity for enterprise and innovation in firms, communities, and education institutions.

Some implications of such a comprehensive and holistic approach to learning throughout life are taken up in the chapters of this report that follow. While a broad spectrum of social, cultural, and economic objectives and values underpin this approach, I have given particular weight to the following objectives:

- personal fulfilment (learning to be);

- active citizenship and sustaining communities;

- social inclusion in building a learning society;

- employability and adaptability in building a 21st century workforce.

Progressing these objectives will benefit all stakeholders.

KEY MESSAGES

1. Learning occurs in many contexts and involves formal, non-formal, and informal modes of learning.

2. A range of types of learning may also be distinguished involving and expressing cognitive, emotional, creative, and spiritual aspects of the human condition.

3. Individuals should be assisted and supported in achieving mastery in various types and forms of learning
   - Learning to learn is the key 21st century competence.

4. Learning strategies should underpin broad areas of social, economic, and cultural development with the wider benefits of learning providing value added outcomes across these areas in holistic strategies.

5. The concept and significance of lifelong learning is not well understood in Australia with this low level of awareness and understanding a major barrier to Australian development under 21st century conditions.

2. THE CONTEXT AND DRIVERS

Why lifelong learning opportunities for all is a necessary response to a new era marked by an exponential pace of change, the impact of globalisation, discontinuity, and the overturning of established paradigms.

This chapter provides a brief overview of the 21st century context of the global post-industrial, post-modern society which is making building Australia as an inclusive learning society, with lifelong learning opportunities for all, a challenge confronting all Australians, and which will require building a shared vision, fresh thinking and new forms of partnership.

The cumulative impact of globalisation, the knowledge society and economy, technology, and demographic change with the ageing of the population, has produced a new context for education and learning in what Lester Thurow has termed an era of "punctuated equilibrium".[7]

It is widely recognised that the new realities of this context require new responses and certain essential underpinnings,[8] including lifelong learning, as "lifelong learning is increasingly necessary for success".[9] As the ILO rightly observes, lifelong learning is now a survival issue.

The Key Drivers

The discussion paper circulated for this project identified a set of six key drivers, that posed major social, economic, and cultural challenges confronting Australian society that made lifelong learning for all an imperative objective for Australia.

These drivers were:

> globalisation, knowledge economy, demography, technology, changes in work and labour markets, and sustaining communities.

While there was broad agreement in my consultations on the centrality of these drivers, and their relevance for lifelong learning, there was also a view expressed

[7] Thurow 1996, p.19.

[8] Kotter 1995, pp.7-8.

[9] See Kotter 1995, Drucker 1991, Handry 2001, OECD 1996, Vaill 1996

that certain social imperatives flowing from this environment, should also be recognised as essential drivers in building Australia as a learning society. While these social imperatives are taken up in the chapters of this report that follow, I have also listed them below.

A brief overview of the key drivers and social imperatives is given below.

Globalisation

The past decades have seen a surge of globalisation driven by market deregulation, the emergence of new information technologies based on micro-electronics, and the globalisation of financial markets.[10] Australia must adapt to the forces and influences of a more interconnected, interdependent and globalised world which poses both opportunities and threats for Australian society.

Knowledge Economy

The emergence of a knowledge economy is leading to new requirements for learning and skill together with imperatives for creativity and innovation in the generation, management, and use of knowledge. The impact of the knowledge economy has overturned traditional business paradigms and brought new competitive requirements for success, with a challenge for business to integrate work and learning.

The new rules for success in this environment have been articulated by leading scholars such as Lester Thurow, John Kotter and Charles Handy,[11] and are pervasive in the work of OECD and professional bodies such as the American Society for Training and Development. People developing throughout working life through lifelong learning is widely seen as necessary for success in this environment.[12]

Demography

Demographic change with the ageing of the population and workforce poses a particular challenge for Australian society with major implications for learning throughout life and avoiding skill shortages. The recent Productivity Commission research report on Economic Implications of an Ageing Australia joins a growing literature on the implications of these trends. In a context where labour force

[10] OECD 1996, p.29.

[11] See Thurow 1999, Kotter 1995, Handy 2001.

[12] Kotter 1995, p.5.

participation rates are projected to fall, issues relating to maintaining older workers in the workforce have assumed a new significance.

The projected fall in labour force participation rates could go along with falls in productivity unless specific action is taken to improve productivity. Developing a workforce of lifelong learners, and enhancing the role of the workplace as a key learning environment should be seen as a key aspect of a strategic response to the ageing of the population. This question is discussed further in Chapter 8.

Technology

The pervasive impact and influence of new technologies is a central feature of 21st century society. While the exponential pace of change driven by new technologies, including the impact of disruptive technologies,[13] poses major issues for social and economic policy, information and communication technology (ICT) also offers new opportunities to extend learning to many new contexts. The impact of the Information Economy is recognised in the Australian Government's Strategic Framework for the Information Economy 2004-2006 which is seen as "an economy in which the rapid development and diffusion of ICT-based innovation is transforming all sectors and all aspects of society".[14] The challenge of harnessing technology for learning purposes is discussed in Chapter 7.

Work and Labour Market

Major changes in the organisation and management of work and labour markets must be seen as requiring learning throughout working life. These changes include the downsizing of many firms, outsourcing of functions, the disappearance of middle level roles, the growth of casual and part-time work, and the disappearance of traditional career concepts. These changes have altered the respective responsibilities of individuals and firms to maintain skill throughout working life. They do go along with major social changes including the emergence of the independent or portfolio lifestyle.[15] These changes pose major dilemmas for employers and individuals in maintaining skill levels and relevance throughout working life.

Communities

The drivers listed above have impacted adversely on many communities so that sustaining communities in a world that is increasingly individualistic in many

13 Christiansen 2001.

14 Australian Government 2004.

15 Handy 2001.

facets is a major issue. It appears that traditional forms of social capital have declined in many communities.[16] However, new forms of social capital are also emerging with such developments as the impact of ICT in forming virtual communities so that changes in communities of place and virtual communities poses a key dimension in the context of this study. The community role is discussed in Chapter 6.

Creativity and Innovation

While much innovation is driven by science and technology, the human and cultural aspects of innovation need also to be seen as critical in building a society and economy where continuous innovation and adapting to change is a central characteristic. As the Business Council of Australia once observed "implementing an innovation strategy in Australia is about people and enterprises … It is not essentially about science and technology".[17] The work of Florida and others on the rise of the "creative class" as the dominant social class in the "creative economy",[18] has drawn attention to the importance of creativity and a capability for ongoing innovation in the knowledge economy, and the necessary cultural underpinnings to build and sustain this capability. Studies by the author of this report on the learning and skills needs of emerging technology based industries in Western Australia and the ACT have pointed to the links between building a learning culture and the capability of industry for creativity and innovation. The strong performance of the Nordic countries across a range of indicators of education outcomes and knowledge economy indicators is discussed in Appendix 2.

Social Imperatives

As noted above, there was a theme in my consultations that this overview of the context of this study should also recognise the consequence of these drivers in throwing up certain social imperatives for Australian society in building an inclusive learning society.

These imperatives were seen as being:

- that all Australians should have the opportunity to become motivated and capable lifelong learners;

16 Putnam 2000, Cox 2002.

17 Carnegie and Butlin 1997, p.18

18 Florida 2002.

- that exclusion from learning opportunities throughout life should be actively addressed;
- that new forms of partnership should associate all stakeholders in concerted action in building Australia as an inclusive learning society;
- responding to increased diversity in Australian society and to shifts in lifestyle and intergenerational change.

These imperatives are discussed in the chapters of this report that follow. I found that diversity and shifts in lifestyles were frequently mentioned in my consultations, and I agree with their significance.

Strengthening the Investment in Human Resources

In addition to these social imperatives, Australia faces an economic imperative in strengthening our investment in human resources in the context of the knowledge economy. The impact of the drivers outlined above makes this a difficult challenge, but one that must be addressed.

The economist Lester Thurow in a recent book on building wealth in the knowledge economy, cites World Bank estimates which show that the productive capital per person in large, lightly populated and well-educated countries such as Australia and Canada comes mainly from land and natural resources which account for 80 per cent of productive wealth with human skills accounting for the other 20 per cent.[19] Thurow observes that in the future with knowledge replacing natural resources as the key ingredient of the third industrial revolution, the value of human resources will be rising and the value of natural resources falling.[20]

This argument makes a compelling case for Australia to increase our investment in human resources through new approaches which link to creative and innovative outcomes. It will be necessary for learning throughout life to underpin such approaches.

Learning in a World of Blur

A further key characteristic of the emerging context of 21st century Australia is the blurring of traditional boundaries, in part the outcome of the speed of change in the connected economy.[21] The convergence of many aspects of contemporary

19 Thurow 1999, p.131.

20 Ibid, p.131.

21 Davis & Meyer 1998.

life is leading to a world of blur across traditional boundaries such as work/life, education/culture, education/health, and a wide range of industry sectors with a blur of desires, fulfilment, and resources.[22]

There are both dilemmas and opportunities in this situation which make a strengthening of learning throughout life essential if opportunities are to be seized and threats neutralised. While this environment has major implications for individuals and communities, the implications for business and industry are especially significant, and require a new approach to human resource and workforce development. This is discussed in Chapter 8 of this report.

The Context Overall

21st century Australia faces an environment marked by exponential change, a new economic order, discontinuity and blur, and the overturning of traditional paradigms. In this context traditional responses are largely obsolete and new ways must be found across broad areas of social, economic, and cultural activity. The search for new ways, a key theme in the Australian Government's Strategic Framework for the Information Economy, 2004-2006,[23] underpins all chapters of this report. Ongoing learning in adapting to change and seizing opportunities is now imperative for individuals, communities, enterprises and organisations, and Australian society overall. The chapters that follow take up key dimensions in the process of building Australia as an inclusive learning society.

22 Ibid, p.14.

23 Australian Government 2004, p.3.

KEY MESSAGES

1. Australia faces the challenge of responding to the key drivers reshaping the 21st century context of life and work and which are overturning traditional paradigms and requiring new ways and ideas.

2. The key drivers are globalisation, knowledge society and economy, demographic change, the impact of technology, changes in work and labour markets, and challenges to families and communities.

3. The exponential pace of change and blurring of traditional boundaries poses a particular challenge.

4. The impact of these drivers make lifelong learning for all an imperative requirement and challenge for Australian society.

3. WHAT ARE OTHERS DOING?

An overview of developments in the European Union, Britain, Germany, the Nordic countries and Canada shows that leading OECD countries are developing comprehensive and coherent frameworks and strategies to build a learning society with opportunities for learning throughout life.

While lifelong learning objectives have had limited recognition and support from most governments and business organisations in Australia,[24] this situation contrasts with the position in other leading OECD countries, and in the European Union.

The compelling case for lifelong learning for a broad spectrum of economic, social, and cultural reasons was set out in OECD and UNESCO reports in 1996,[25] and has since had the support of ILO, World Bank, and the G8 group of leading countries.[26]

OECD has continued since 1996 to examine key aspects of progressing lifelong learning policies, while this accumulating knowledge base has informed the policies adopted by the European Union to build a European Area of Lifelong Learning.[27]

Britain, Germany, the Nordic countries and Canada provide examples of countries with active lifelong learning policies and strategies, while programs in the United States are driven less by government than by initiatives taken by leading enterprises, professional associations, foundations, and groups of universities.

European Union

The European Union (EU) has a strong commitment to lifelong learning as an integral aspect of the integrated social, economic, and cultural development of Europe. The Lisbon European Council in March 2000 set the target of Europe

[24] Some examples of good practice such as Tasmania's strong support for lifelong learning and Victoria's support for Learning Towns and other learning initiatives are cited in the discussion paper.

[25] OECD 1996, UNESCO 1996.

[26] ILO 2003; World Bank 2003; G8 The Cologne Declaration.

[27] European Commission 2001.

becoming the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based society in the world with lifelong learning a basic component of the European social model.[28]

Lifelong learning objectives now underpin all EU education and training programs with lifelong learning objectives strengthened in the new generation of education and training programs to be implemented after 2006.[29]

It is EU policy that all Member countries should have coherent and comprehensive national lifelong learning strategies by 2006.[30]

The EU approach to lifelong learning was set out in a November 2001 Communication from the European Commission on Making a European Area of Lifelong Learning a Reality, following development work over some years.[31]

The EU framework for lifelong learning set by the 2001 Communication was directed at creating a learning culture in Europe, facilitating access to learning opportunities, and achieving excellence in learning, and generally contributing to the Lisbon objective of building a dynamic knowledge-based society.[32]

The framework established a number of principles which have been elaborated in subsequent EU policy. These principles included:

- the centrality of the learner within formal, non-formal and informal learning experiences;
- equality of opportunity in meeting learning genuinely available for all without discrimination;
- achieving high quality and relevance.

A key aspect of the Communication was that "Member States must fundamentally transform learning systems, including initial education, with a view to making quality learning opportunities accessible to all on an ongoing basis."[33]

The new generation of EU education programs after 2006 will include a new Integrated Program in Lifelong Learning which will aim to reinforce synergies

28 Ibid, p.6.

29 European Commission 2004.

30 Ibid, p.6.

31 European Commission 2001.

32 Ibid, p.15.

33 Ibid, p.11.

between various education and training thrusts in a more strategic and co-ordinated approach.[34]

Overall, EU policy for lifelong learning shows a concerted approach to integrating lifelong learning objectives in all education and training policy, and to the Lisbon objective of building Europe as the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based society in the world.

Britain

Action take by the present British Government since 1997 illustrates a national approach to promoting lifelong learning opportunities for all and building an inclusive learning society. As in the European Union, lifelong learning objectives are linked to other areas of social, cultural and economic policy.

This development has included a series of initiatives since 1998 which included the following:

- in February 1998 a Green Paper *The Learning Age* set out a vision for Britain as an inclusive learning society;[35]
- a June 1999 White Paper *Learning to Succeed: A New Framework for Post-16 Learning* announced Structural Reforms directed at greater coherence in post-16 learning;[36]
- national learning targets were set to monitor progress;
- the national network of Training and Enterprise Councils (TECs) was replaced by a new network of Learning and Skill Councils with a national Learning and Skill Council to co-ordinate action;[37]
- online learning provision has been strengthened through Learndirect with access to a large number of courses;
- a strategic approach to addressing deficiencies in basic skills has been adopted in follow up on the Moser Working Party report and the 2001 Skills for Life report which articulated a national strategy to improve adult literacy and numeracy, while the Basic Skills Agency promotes the Government's objectives in this area;

34 European Commission 2004, p.3.

35 Secretary of State for Education and Employment 1998.

36 Secretary of State for Education and Employment 1999.

37 See Learning and Skills Councils www.lsc.gov.uk.

- a Lifelong Learning Sector Skills Council has been established covering skills development for the workforce across all lifelong learning sectors (including higher education and libraries);

- school reform has been aligned with lifelong learning objectives.

Building Britain as an inclusive learning society is a work in progress with the initiatives cited above providing a selection of a wide range of initiatives. There has been strong private support for lifelong learning objectives through organisations such as the national Campaign for Learning (www.campaign_for_learning.org.uk) while at a government level a number of agencies such as the Department for Education and Skills and the national Learning and Skills Council have key roles.

A key aspect of the British approach lies in the roles of the local Learning and Skill Councils which provide a local interface with funding powers to co-ordinate local learning and skill development. This infrastructure provides for a strategic approach to integrating learning and skills development in communities.

The Department for Education and Skills has a dedicated web site for lifelong learning (www.lifelonglearning.co.uk).

Germany

Germany provides an interesting example of a federal country with a strong training system which has taken strategic action to promote lifelong learning.

While the German dual training system is justly renowned, Germany has had a long interest in learning strategies to support this system, with the vocational research agency BIBB active in this area. More recently, there has been an acceleration of initiatives to promote lifelong learning in Germany in line with EU policy and objectives.

German initiative has included:

- the Joint Federal Government-State Commission for Educational Planning and Research Promotion (BLK) has developed a Strategy for Lifelong Learning which has been jointly agreed by the Federal and State Governments through the BLK machinery;[38]

- the funding of an ambitious Learning Region program with substantial funding and some 79 projects across Germany;[39]

[38] Joint Federal-State Commission for Educational Planning & Research 2004.

[39] Federal Ministry of Education and Research 2003.

- the establishment by the Federal Government of an Expert Commission on Financing Lifelong Learning to develop a coherent approach to the funding of lifelong learning;[40]

- the establishment of an Education Forum as a joint Federal/State initiative for progressing dialogue on the reform of education systems in line with the EU Lisbon Council objectives to build a knowledge-based European economic and social area.[41]

Strategy for Lifelong Learning

An agreed Federal/State Strategy for Lifelong Learning emerged from the work of a working group established by the Joint Federal-State Commission for Education Planning and Research (BLK) in 2002, leading to the Strategy being adopted by the Commission by July 2004.

Features of the agreed national strategy include:

- recognition of the centrality of the learner;

- it adopts a phases of life approach with the reasons for learning and forms on learning depending on the learners phase of life;

- it includes a number of development focuses;

- progress is to occur through the interlinkage of development focuses and phases of life as the framework for action;

- a broad approach to learning which incorporates informal learning in many contexts as well as formal;

- all sectors and stages of education to recognise that they are part of a chain of lifelong learning;

- government, industry, and those responsible for innovation are all stakeholders in promoting lifelong learning.[42]

The German Strategy for Lifelong Learning conforms to principles developed by OECD, the European Commission and other international agencies, and is of interest in illustrating a contemporary 21st century approach to lifelong learning in a federal system. Much of the strategy is relevant to the Australian situation, and could provide a useful model in the assessment of Australian needs.

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40 Ibid, p.3.

41 Ibid, p.1.

42 Joint Federal-State Commission for Educational Planning & Research 2004.

Some key features are:

Phases of life approach

- Five phases in the lifecycle are identified: children, adolescents, young adults, adults, older people.
- Key development priorities have been identified for each phase

  eg **childhood** has a focus on motivation and capacity for learning;

  adolescents has a focus on skills development (including social skills, team work, self-directed learning);

  young adults brings a focus on informal learning, self-directed learning and skills development with networks of partners collaborating;

  adults lifelong learning gains ever greater importance in a context of rapid change with self-directed learning a key;

  older people brings a need to address age-specific barriers to learning with maintaining independence and self-determination important (autonomy or personal mastery).[43]

Development focuses

The development focuses identified are: inclusion of informal learning, self-directed learning, development of skills, networking, modularization, learning guidance, new learning culture and the popularization of learning, equal opportunities for access. An overview of the German phases of life approach is given in Figure 1 over.

Interlinkage of phases of life and development focus

This interlinkage will drive the process of building Germany as an inclusive learning society.

Partners in development

Government, business and industry, education institutions, and communities are seen as partners in driving the development process. Developing awareness and understanding is an initial need.

[43] Federal Ministry of Education and Research 2003.

Learning Region Program

The objectives identified in the Strategy for Lifelong Learning are being furthered through the ambitious Learning Region program with some 79 projects being funded across Germany. The Learning Region program aims to build collaborating networks across regions to progress lifelong learning objectives. The development of networks is seen as providing an infrastructure for lifelong learning with links to other policy areas such as labour market policy. The program also drives the "Lifelong Learning for Everyone Action Program". Some EUR 118 million is being made available for this program from federal funding and the European Social Fund.[44]

A number of the Learning Region projects are linked to similar initiatives in other parts of Europe through the European Union's R3L initiative which provides for a sharing of experience. In this way new ideas for fostering lifelong learning across Europe through Learning Region projects are disseminated.

The German Approach

Overall, the German approach shows a pattern of partnership development in a federal system which combines local initiatives with the systemic development of a national strategy for lifelong learning. Some features of the German Strategy for Lifelong Learning appear relevant to Australia.

[44] Federal Ministry of Education and Research 2003, p.17.

Figure 1: **German Federal/State Commission for Education Planning and Research Promotion**

Strategies for Lifelong Learning

Phases of Life

Development Focuses

- Inclusion of informal learning
- Self-directed learning
- Development of skill
- Networking
- Modularization
- Learning guidance
- New learning culture (popularization)
- Equal opportunities for access

Childhood	Adolescents	Young adults	Adults	Older people
Development priorites identified for each phase				
Motivation & capacity for learning - networks to support learning	Skills development - social skills & basis for self-directed learning	Informal learning self-directed learning, skills development - networks important	Self-structured leearning throughout life - modular approach	Easy access to lifelong learning -intergenerational learning

a. Framework formed by interlinkage of development focuses & phases of life
b. A sample of development priorities are shown above for each phase of life

Canada

Canada provides an interesting example of the active promotion of lifelong learning in a federal system without a federal power in education, and consequently without a national education department, where significant steps have been taken to build Canada as a learning society.

These initiatives have involved close partnership action between the Department of Human Resources and Skills Development and Industry Canada leading to a National Summit on Innovation and Learning held in 2002 which provided the springboard for a national Action Plan.

Some key features of this development has been:

- the National Summit on Innovation and Learning held in 2002 which was preceded by community consultations across Canada over seven months;
- an agreed five point Action Plan emerging from the Summit which includes as its foundation initial point:
    1. *To make Canada a learning society, where learning and upgrading become continuous;*
- following the Summit, the establishment by the Canadian Government of a Canadian Council on Learning (initially known as the Canadian Learning Institute (www.ccl-cca.ca);
- the funding of a number of community based learning programs, including Smart Communities which promote innovative uses of ICT in communities and Community Learning Networks.

Features of the Canadian approach to building a learning society include the innovative uses of ICT in community based programs such as Smart Communities and Community Learning Networks, and the links made between learning and innovation strategies. This orientation fosters a broad approach to learning in many contexts based on the premise that "learning and knowledge are foundations for citizenship, social participation and economic success".

The recent establishment of the Canadian Council on Learning will provide a focal point for research and monitoring progress in building Canada as an innovative learning society. An early task of the Council will be to develop a set of indicators to monitor and report progress in lifelong learning. Canada and Australia share a good deal in common and much would be gained by developing links with Canada

for exchanges of information and ideas on progressing lifelong learning and building a learning society.

The Nordic Countries

An overview of development of lifelong learning in the Nordic countries is given in Appendix 2. This overview covers Sweden, Finland, Norway and Denmark. The Nordic Countries have done most among OECD countries to develop coherent and comprehensive policies for lifelong learning, and offer the best portrait to date of the features and characteristics of an inclusive learning society.

A feature of "The Nordic Way" discussed in Appendix 2 is that the strong commitment to lifelong learning in these countries has been accompanied by high performance in the outcomes of education, as measured in OECD assessments such as PISA and IALS, and also in various measures of capability for competitive performance in the knowledge economy such as country rankings in the Global Competitiveness Report and the Global Information Technology Report prepared for the World Economic Forum, and assessments on the Innovation Index prepared for the National Innovation Capacity Project.

The strong performance of these leaders in lifelong learning and building a learning society across this range of international assessments is discussed in Appendix 2.

Implications for Australia

The European Union, Britain, Germany, the Nordic countries and Canada illustrate action taken by leading OECD countries to promote lifelong learning and build an inclusive learning society.

Australia differs to these examples in the absence of comprehensive and coherent national policy framework and strategies to promote lifelong learning and build an inclusive learning society.

While various elements of such a policy framework exist in initiatives taken by State, Territory, and Commonwealth governments, and other stakeholders, there is fragmentation of effort with action not sufficiently comprehensive and coherent in terms of lifelong learning principles. Australia would fail the EU test required of Member countries.

The failure of most governments (although not all) to actively promote lifelong learning means that the imperatives for lifelong learning are not well understood in Australia, and key stakeholders such as business are not active partners in building Australia as an inclusive learning society.

This underinvestment by Australia in lifelong learning and human resources will have deleterious consequences for Australians in the longer term unless addressed. I take up in Chapter 4 which follows, the need for action along five pillars for building Australia as a learning society.

KEY MESSAGES

1. Leading OECD countries are developing comprehensive and coherent policies and frameworks to advance lifelong learning through holistic and integrated strategies.

2. This is European Union policy and may be observed in countries such as Germany, United Kingdom, Canada, and the Nordic countries.

3. Australia has not up to now adopted this approach and lacks a national policy framework for lifelong learning and building a learning society although some States have taken initiatives to foster lifelong learning.

4. While there is considerable fragmentation of effort in Australia, various initiatives exist which contribute to lifelong learning opportunities which could be brought into a more coherent and comprehensive framework to support partnership action.

4. RESPONSES: FIVE KEY DIMENSIONS IN BUILDING AUSTRALIA AS AN INCLUSIVE LEARNING SOCIETY

An overview of five key dimensions in coherent and comprehensive strategies to build Australia as an inclusive learning society.

The discussion paper circulated with this project was based on four scenarios for future directions in achieving a learning revolution.[45] While these scenarios remain relevant to the processes for building Australia as an inclusive learning society, my discussions with stakeholders across Australia led me to conclude that it was preferable to map the pathways to the future in another way which would enable the range of stakeholders to identify more clearly with the key issues and necessary responses.

For this reason, the chapters of this report which follow have been structured around a model with five key dimensions and directions for building Australia as a learning society. This approach is illustrated in Figure 1.

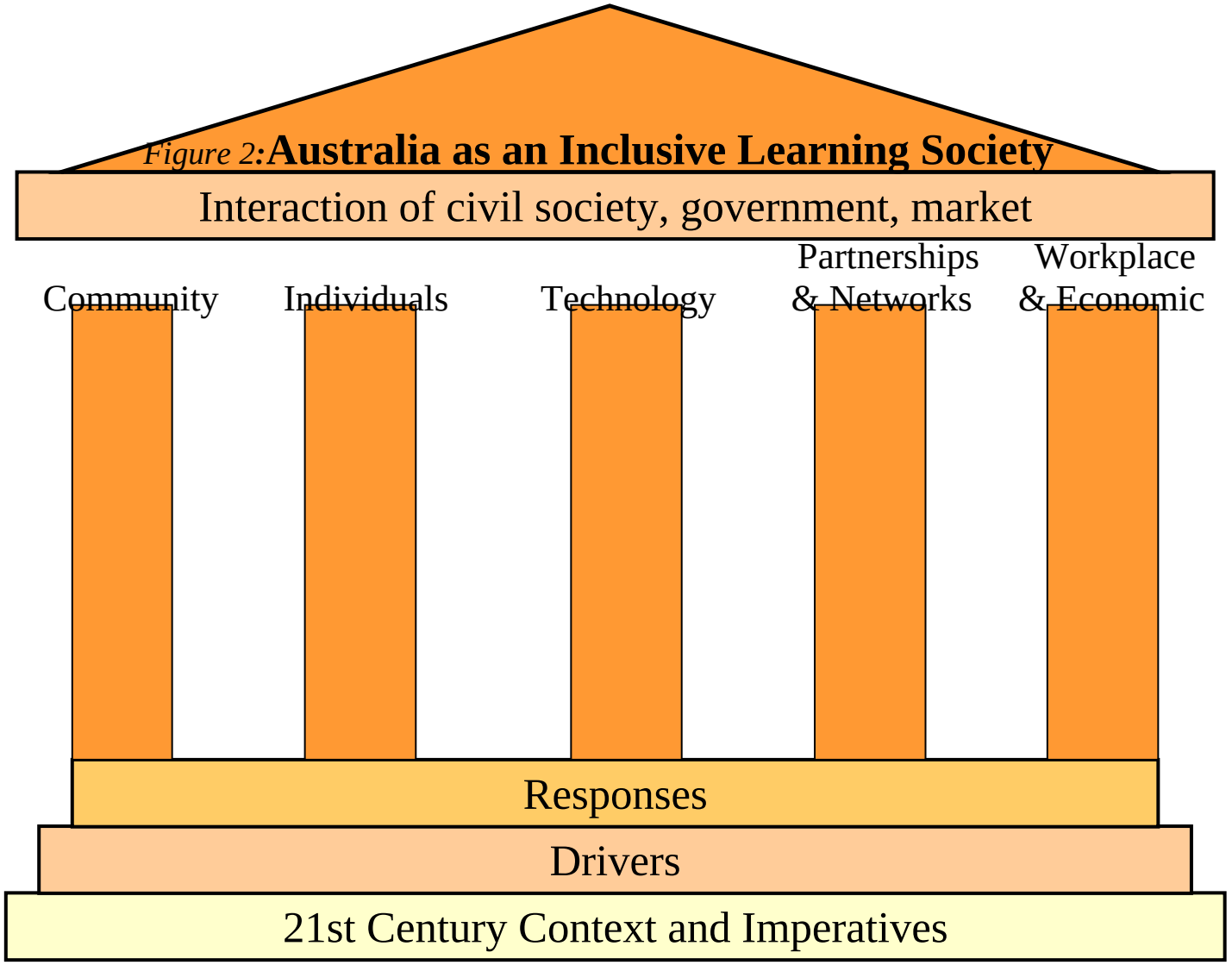
The five pillars, or building blocks, of this approach are:

1. empowering individuals as motivated and capable lifelong learners;
2. sustaining and transforming communities through learning;
3. using technology to extend learning environments and transform the way we learn;
4. developing the workplace as a key learning environment to underpin economic objectives;
5. extending and connecting partnerships and networks to build Australia as an inclusive learning society.

While action along each of these dimensions is needed, progress will also depend critically on the extent to which connections can be made between these pillars in building holistic and integrated strategies for lifelong learning in many contexts. Partnerships and networks will need to work across the whole learning spectrum.

[45] These scenarios were: 1 Civil society and local government in the driving seat; 2 Government support for selected local and regional initiatives; 3 Comprehensive and integrated State and Territory initiatives; 4 Development of a national framework to build Australia as an inclusive and innovative learning society.

Figure 2: **Australia as an Inclusive Learning Society**



For example, community and technology strategies can provide a framework for empowering and supporting individuals as lifelong learners, while linking the workplace and community more closely in such strategies will bring benefits both ways.

Achieving such holistic and comprehensive strategies for lifelong learning and community development will require progressing whole-of-government frameworks and building new relationships between the roles of civil society, government, and market. This will be a learning process for all stakeholders requiring considerable cultural and institutional change and a sustained research effort to monitor progress.

Nevertheless, in my consultations across Australia I observed many examples of creative innovations that had the seeds of the future in them. Finding ways to extend and connect such innovations will be central to the rate of progress. This will require creative thinking beyond current paradigms in most systems with the sharing of good ideas a key requirement. As Johansson rightly observes, breakthrough insights usually occur at the intersection of ideas, concepts, and cultures.[46]

The Three Capitals for the Wider Benefits of Learning

In adopting the broad approach to lifelong learning in many contexts discussed in Chapter1, I have followed the work of the London University Centre on the Wider Benefits of Learning which has examined the benefits of learning in such fields as health, sustaining families, and building social capital in communities.[47]

The work of the WBL Centre has been underpinned by a conceptual model based on the interaction of three forms of capital: human, social, and identity.[48]

- **Human capital** refers to the knowledge and skills possessed by individuals.
- **Social capital** refers to the networks and norms which enable people to contribute effectively to common goals.
- **Identity capital** refers to the characteristics of individuals that define his or her outlook and self-esteem. Confidence and self-esteem may be a key manifestation of this form of capital.[49]

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46 Johansson 2004, p2

47 Schuller et al 2004.

48 Ibid, pp.12-22.

These forms of capital are illustrated in Figure 3 which is intended to show how these three dimensions intersect and interact.

Schuller comments on the impact of these three forms of capital throughout the lives of individuals in leading to the wider benefits of learning in the following terms.

> *The simplest way to address our analysis is therefore to think of learning as a process whereby people build up — consciously or not — their assets in the shape of human, social, or identify capital, and then benefit from the returns on the investment in the shape of better health, stronger social networks, and enhanced family life, and so on.*[50]

In a world of constant change, there are grounds for believing that development of all these forms of capital is necessary in sustaining individuals and communities. While the significance of human and social capital has received fairly general recognition, identity capital is a useful addition in drawing attention to the significance of identity in sustaining individuals in the transitions throughout life required by 21st century conditions.

The interaction of these forms of capital with the five pillars of a learning society discussed above is worthy of considerable discussion in the identification of strategies to build Australia as an inclusive learning society.

The contribution that each of the sectors of education, and other relevant organisations, can make to building these forms of capital in communities merits serious discussion, in particular in the context of learning community initiatives.

The role of the five pillars of a learning society in achieving a learning revolution in many contexts, and building an inclusive learning society is taken up in the chapters of this report which follow.

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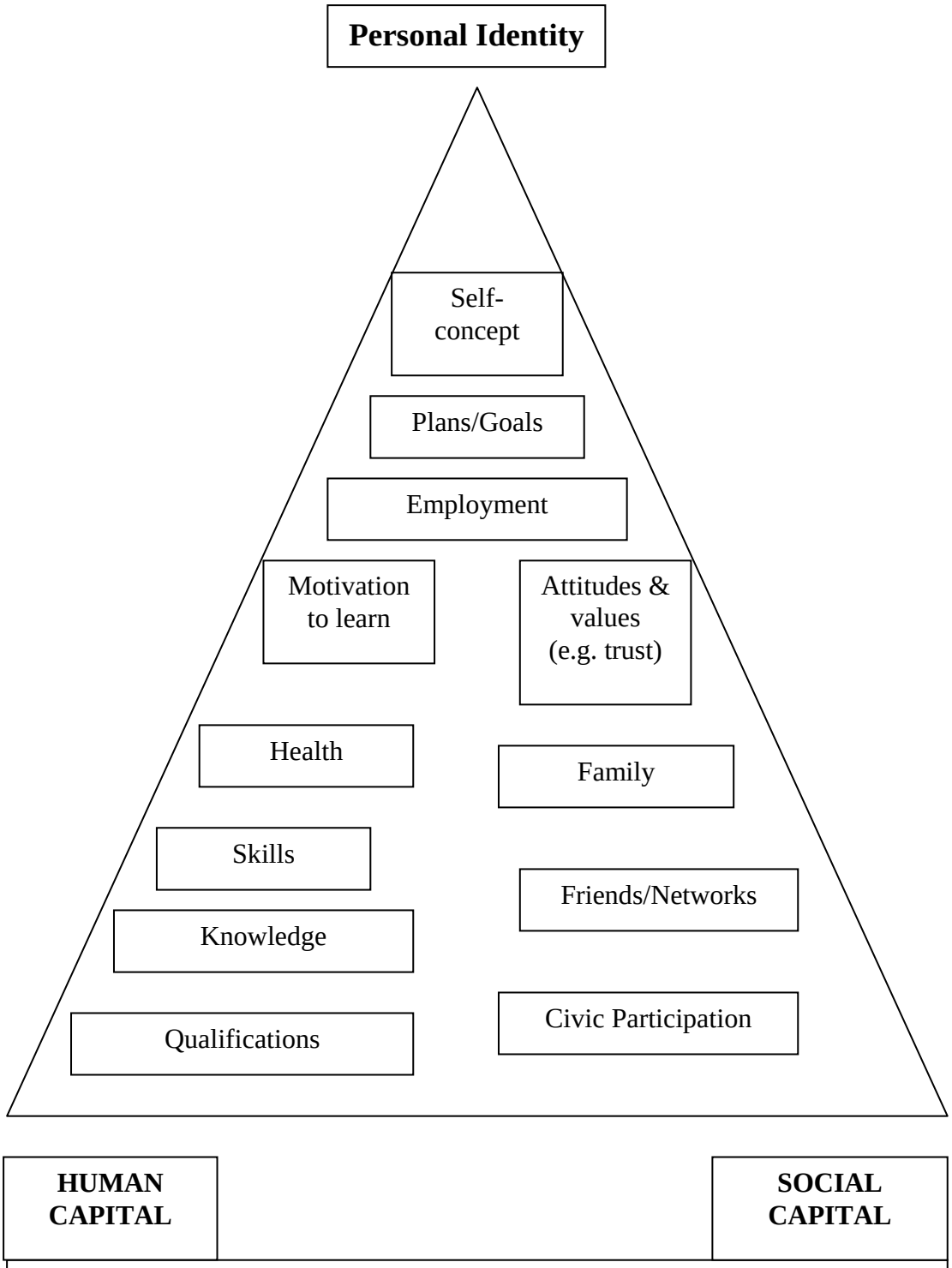
49 Ibid, pp.12-22.

50 Ibid, p.12.

Figure 3: **Access to and participation in learning**



Reproduced from Schuller et al, (2002) *Learning, Continuity and Change in Adult Life.* Wider Benefits of Learning Research Report No. 3. Centre for Research on the Wider Benefits of Learning, Institute of Education, University of London.

KEY MESSAGES

1. This report has adopted an approach for progressing lifelong learning and building Australia as an inclusive learning society based on five mutually supporting pillars.

2. These pillars are: empowering individuals as lifelong learners; sustaining and transforming communities through learning; using technology to transform the way we learn; developing the workplace as a key learning environment; extending and connecting partnerships and networks to build Australia as an inclusive learning society.

3. The report also adopts a conceptual framework involving three types of capital developed by the London University Research Centre on the Wider Benefits of Learning.

4. These types of capital (human, social, and identity) are relevant to both work and life in society and can be applied to underpin holistic and integrated strategies for social and economic development.

5. EMPOWERING INDIVIDUALS AS LIFELONG LEARNERS

The role of lifelong learning in empowering individuals to lead a fulfilling life in work and in society

Empowering self-directed learners to have the motivation and capability to continue learning and developing throughout life is central to building Australia as an inclusive and successful learning society in a world of constant change.

At the same time, the emancipatory nature of education and learning throughout life is critical in sustaining and transforming individual lives in this 21st century context of threat and opportunity.

In the context discussed in Chapter 2, there is a danger of greater inequality in society if all people are not given the opportunity and support to become motivated lifelong learners.[51] The spectre of a learning divide in a two-tier society is a real threat in a world of constant change and discontinuity.

While a valuable start has been made at the school level with measures such as the National Literacy and Numeracy Plan, to ensure that all school leavers have essential literacy and numeracy skills, much remains to be done to open learning pathways for all adults, with the danger of considerable intergenerational inequality unless a concerted and sustained effort is made.

This objective is increasingly central in the context of the socio-economic shifts in Australian society associated with the drivers discussed in Chapter 2. The impact of the knowledge society and economy, changes in work and labour markets, demographic change and the ageing of the population put pressure on the individual to continue learning throughout life to maintain employability and a constructive and fulfilling life in society. The independent life in a complex ever-changing society, as described by Charles Handy[52], brings new pressures and imperatives that enhance the significance of the objective of building a society of empowered and motivated self directed learners. Autonomy, or personal mastery, is rightly seen as an essential competence for all in a world of exponential change.

While this objective poses a major challenge for all stakeholders in Australian society, there are now tools and a growing knowledge base to facilitate effective

[51] Unesco 1996, p.101.

[52] Handy 2003.

responses. The role of technology in supporting learning in many contexts opens new ways of extending learning opportunities to more people, while strategies such as learning communities and organisations provide ways of motivating and supporting learning in key social contexts. While the necessary ingredients are better known, we have yet to move up a gear to a co-ordinated national campaign for learning.

A number of key issues which need to be addressed were raised in my consultations across Australia. These include:

- the need to move to a learner-centred lifelong learning system with increased personalisation of learning;
- the requirement to respond to a greater diversity of needs;
- taking policies and strategies for ICT beyond an access stage to building networks and communities of learners across Australia so that technology becomes a major tool for empowering learners;
- combating embedded social exclusion for the groups most disadvantaged;
- marshalling all community resources (such as libraries, media, volunteers and civil society generally) for a concerted national campaign;
- addressing the particular needs of older people, including older workers;
- supporting people in the main transition points in life.

The question of supporting people in the main transition points in life relates to the notion of participation needs in various phases of life in a learning continuum throughout life with shifts in emphasis in different life phases. This concept is reflected in the new German strategy for lifelong learning discussed in Chapter 3.

The social and economic costs of not addressing the needs of those excluded from learning opportunities throughout life will be huge, so that a long-term investment strategy is required.

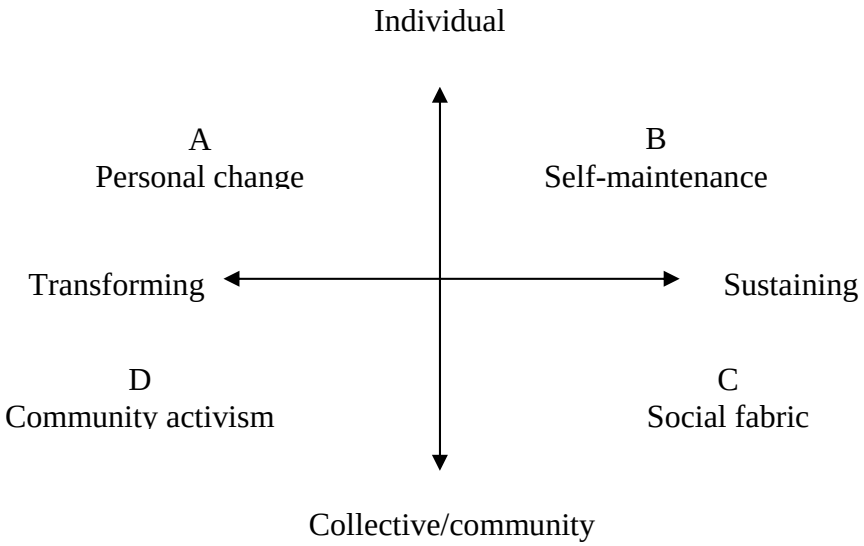
Empowering Individuals to Sustain and Transform Lives

The emancipatory nature of education and learning throughout life in sustaining and transforming individual lives in a complex world of exponential change is a key benefit of lifelong learning.

This aspect was examined in a study undertaken by the British Research Centre on the Wider Benefits of Learning which included 145 individual case studies.[53] Analysis of the life experiences of the 145 interviewees showed clearly the sustaining and transforming effects of learning. In a number of cases, people from poor homes with negative experiences of schooling had lives transformed through subsequent involvement in adult education. A key aspect was the confidence and self-esteem gained from successful participation in adult education, leading to benefits for family relationships, civic participation, motivation for further learning, and a range of other wider benefits of learning.

The sustaining and transforming effects of learning were classified by the RCWB researchers for individuals and communities in the model set out below as Figure 4.[54] In a period of radical social and economic change, these benefits of learning throughout life have become increasingly important. The need to sustain and support individuals in transitions throughout life in this context gives enhanced significance to lifelong learning with identity capital, reflected in the confidence and self-esteem of individuals, rightly added by the RCWB researchers to human and social capital as a connector between individual lives and social and economic outcomes for Australian society.

Figure 4: **Classifying the effects of learning**



Source: Centre for Research on the Wider Benefits of Learning, 2004

[53] Schuller 2004.

[54] Ibid, p25

Fostering Self-directed Learning in the Digital Age

Producing citizens who are self-directed learners is now being facilitated by the impact of technology leading to new ways of learning. As Candy points out, the interplay of the dual themes of the digital revolution and self-directed learning is one of the great themes of the present age which will drive the development of Australia as a learning society.[55]

> *Within the context of lifelong learning, self-directed learning is one key way in which people keep up with change, since we are currently experiencing an unprecedented level and pace of change on a global scale, it is plausible to expect the demands of a changing world to lead to greater amounts of self-directed learning.*[56]

I comment on the role of technology in driving lifelong learning in Chapter 7.

A Phases of Life Approach

I refer in Chapter 3 to the new German Federal/State Strategy for Lifelong Learning which adopts a phases of life approach with a different emphasis and development priorities in each of the five phases identified in the life cycle.[57] These phases of life are: childhood, adolescents, young adults, adults, older people. Key development priorities have been identified for each life phase. This approach is based on the assumption that the reasons for learning and forms of learning depend mainly on the learner's phases of life.

This approach has considerable merit, especially in the current context of demographic change, and provides a basis for a learning continuum throughout life with shifts in emphasis and priorities according to the needs of successive life phases. It provides a useful way of aligning a learner-centred approach with the need for systemic perspectives required by the lifelong learning approach.

Such an approach also aligns well with the growing interest in human resource management in firms in the concept of strategic age management. While this interest is largely driven by issues relating to older workers with the ageing of the population, and concern with skill shortages, it is also being applied to youth, and could be applied to all life phases in flexible human resource management policies that are responsive to social change and shifts in lifestyle, and which build and

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55 Candy 2004, pp.1-2.

56 Ibid, p.3.

57 Joint Federal-State Commission for Educational Planning & Research 2004.

maintain the motivation of workers for learning, personal development, and maintaining the currency of skill.

From Job for Life to Employability for Life

The 2003 British White Paper on 21st Century Skills observed that the global economy has largely made extinct the notion of a job for life. The imperative is now employability for life.[58]

There is much truth in this observation, so that a key aspect of empowering individual learners lies in empowering people to keep learning throughout life so as to maintain their employability.

This imperative involves:

- motivation to continue learning throughout life;
- key learning skills (the so-called employability generic skills);
- access to information and support.

While maintaining employability is an important social and economic objective, the key generic learning skills are also life skills so that economic and social objectives are necessarily entwined.[59]

What are the Essential 21st Century Skills for Empowering People?

The question of employability skills links to the broader question of what are the essential 21st century skills that are a necessary underpinning for empowered individuals in a complex society subject to constant change.

This question has generated substantial discussion and analysis in recent years with a broad spectrum of views expressed. However, there is a generally accepted view that more than the traditional concept of literacy and numeracy is required for individuals to navigate the turbulence of contemporary conditions and achieve personal mastery over circumstances.

The various lists include the following:

- **British Skills Strategy**

  This list of six key skills is divided into two categories:

58 Secretary of State for Education and Skills 2003, p.11.

59 Ibid, p.60.

- a set of three key skills which are tested: communication, numeracy, ICT;

- a set of "Wider Key Skills" which are only assessed internally: problem solving, improving own learning and performance; working with others;[60]

- **European Union**

  The Lisbon European Council identified two categories of foundation skills and new basics These have been build into the EU strategy for lifelong learning:[61]

  - the foundation skills of reading, writing, mathematics, and learning to learn;

  - the new basics of ICT skills, foreign languages, technology culture, entrepreneurship, social skills.[62]

- **Australian ACCI/BCA Employability Skills**

  The list developed by an ACCI/BCA working party for the VET sector as employability skills involves the following skills:

  - communication, teamwork, problem solving, self management, planning and organising, technology, learning, initiative and enterprise.

This is a useful list with the recognition of a learning capability as a necessary skill a key feature.[63]

OECE DeSeCo Program

The five year OECD DeSeCo program had a substantial theoretical input from a range of academic disciplines. A holistic approach to competence was adopted spanning life, society, and work with three categories of key competencies identified (with three competences in each category).

These categories are:

1. interacting in socially heterogeneous groups;

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60 Ibid.

61 European Commission 2001.

62 Ibid, p.22.

63 Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry and Business Council of Australia 2002.

2. acting autonomously;

3. using tools interactively.[64]

The holistic approach of the DeSeCo program is reflected in the desired outcomes identified: a successful life and a well-functioning society.[65] The importance of people being able to act autonomously in a world of constant change which overturns established paradigms receives comment in the following terms:

> *Acting autonomously means that individuals are empowered to navigate in the social space and to manage their lives in meaningful and responsible ways by exercising control over their living and working conditions. Thus acting autonomously means to act rather than to be acted upon, to shape rather than to be shaped, and to choose rather than to accept choices decided by others.*[66]

Defined in this way, acting autonomously has much in common with the concept of personal mastery used by Peter Senge and others,[67] and may be seen as a necessary attribute of building a creative enterprise culture in Australia. How to promote this aptitude in Australian education, training, and society generally requires further examination in building a learning society.

The DeSeCo approach should be seen as providing a useful framework for lifelong personal development built around the three poles of personal development, understand and interacting with others, and achieving 21st century literacy. A number of the competencies built into the ACCI/BCA framework can be built into this broader, holistic framework as Figure 5 over illustrates.

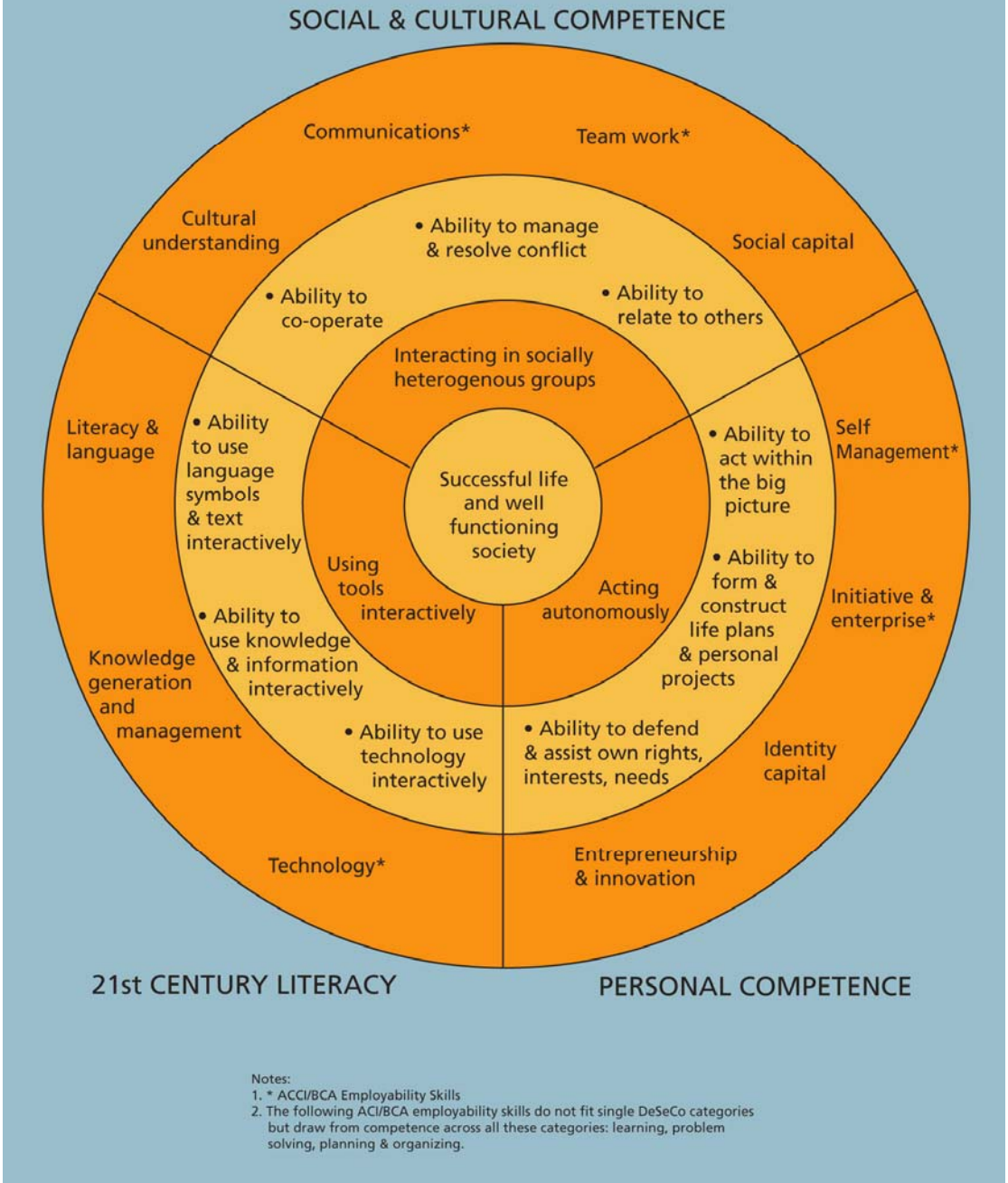
64 Rychen & Salganik 2003, pp.63-107.

65 Ibid, pp.109-134.

66 Ibid, p.9.

67 Senge 1990.

Figure 5: **Relationship of OECD DeSeCo Key Competencies and ACCI/BCA Employability Skills**



Notes:
1. * ACCI/BCA Employability Skills
2. The following ACI/BCA employability skills do not fit single DeSeCo categories but draw from competence across all these categories: learning, problem solving, planning & organizing.

The Kearns Model

A research review of generic skills I undertook in 2001 for NCVER concluded that these skills should be seen as four overlapping and interacting clusters of key skills focused around a core of ongoing personal development that might be termed personal mastery or autonomy.[68] This approach has a fair amount of common ground with the OECD DeSeCo approach.

Other Lists

The examples given above illustrate the range of views on what are the essential 21st century skills. Other lists include:

- an American list developed by the US Departments of Commerce, Education, and Labor and other partners which identified four categories for essential skills for work: basic skills, technical skills, organisational skills, company specific skills;[69]
- lists produced by the Conference Board of Canada for employability skills and innovation skills.[70]

My Conclusions

While further Australian research is needed on the essential 21st century skills that all Australians should achieve, the conclusions and principles I have drawn from a review of the international literature is set out below as a basis for discussion.

1. They should include both the foundation skills developed through schools, and a wider set of "new basics" relevant to a dynamic technological society which include communication and social skills, and skills and attributes which underpin creativity, innovation, and adapting to change.

2. Learning to learn in a range of contexts and forms is the essential 21st century competence.

3. It is not useful to make a distinction between employability skills and life skills. Rather, the essential foundation skills and "new basics" should be seen as life, employability, and innovation skills

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68 Kearns 2001.

69 US Departments of Commerce, Labor and Education et al 1999.

70 See www.conferenceboard.ca/nbec.

- This is an aspect of the requirement for a holistic approach to the development of people for work, life in society, and personal fulfilment.

4. Key generic skills need to be viewed in a dynamic way as constellations or clusters that are interrelated with contextual specificity[71]

   - Meeting any situation in work or social life will require shifting constellations of key competencies that vary with the context.

5. Clusters of key generic skills should be related to the ongoing personal development of the individual throughout life through a process of personal mastery and acting autonomously.

6. The key generic skills should underpin strategies to build creativity and a capacity for innovation into communities, organisations, and firms.

7. It is useful to relate ongoing development of key generic skills to a phases of life approach as, for example, set out in the German Strategy for Lifelong Learning discussed in Chapter 3.

Some Implications of these Principles

The principles set out above require further research, testing, and discussion across sectoral frontiers. However, I believe that they could form the basis for a contemporary 21st century holistic approach to key life and employability skills for all Australians which will benefit industry, communities, and individuals. Some implications of these principles are set out below:

1. They would contribute to building human, social, and identity capital (as set out in the WBL Centre model discussed in Chapter 4) in communities, organisations, and enterprises.

2. They would serve as a necessary underpinning for empowering individuals to lead a successful and fulfilling life in a well functioning society.

3. Through building social and identity capital in communities, they would contribute to sustaining cohesive communities.

[71] Rychen and Salganik 2003, pp.105-109.

4. Business and industry will benefit from a more motivated and capable workforce able to adapt to changing conditions and to be innovative.

5. The key generic skills (foundation and new basics) should be seen as a necessary underpinning for lifelong learning and building a learning society.

6. Identity capital, as reflected in a self-concept and attributes such as confidence and self-esteem, is a critical component in building motivation in individuals to continue learning through life

   - This is a necessary component in a strategy for addressing the question of retaining older workers in the workforce;

7. Individuals without the essential foundations and new basics need to be motivated, assisted and supported in acquiring these fundamentals of 21st century life

   - All stakeholders should be partners in the search for new ways to address this requirement.

8. The potential of technology in supporting and extending learning in many contexts should be drawn on in innovative approaches to addressing the target of key generic skills for all as a foundation for lifelong learning.

Addressing these principles and implications is taken up in the chapters of this report that follow dealing with community-based learning strategies, the role of technology, learning in the workplace, and extending networks and partnerships.

There would be considerable value in active discussion of these tentative conclusions and implications by stakeholders, including business and industry. These principles and their implications are relevant to building seamless learning pathways across the sectors of education and training, and linking these to wider community and work contexts.

Building key generic skills for all Australians will require a necessary long-term investment in Australian human resources, and the forging of many partnerships to progress this investment.

Towards an Appropriate Pedagogy for Lifelong Learning

The rise in international interest in lifelong learning over the past decade has been accompanied by a search for learning strategies that motivate and support individuals in their learning journeys through life.

OECD in its 1996 report *Lifelong Learning for All* raised the possibility of a new pedagogy for lifelong learning citing the research of Raizen in what makes learning effective.[72] The Raizen principles included active learning strategies involving shifts in the roles of teacher and learner aimed at producing motivated and capable self-directed learners.

More recently, the World Bank summarised the characteristics of traditional and lifelong learning models in the terms set out in Table 1.

While the lifelong learning principles cited by the World Bank are common currency in adult and community education, they are not yet standard practice in all sectors of education and training, and more attention needs to be given to the pedagogical implications of lifelong learning. The ongoing impact of technology on learning reinforces the need to find learning strategies that motivate and extend learning throughout life.

The need to re-assess the pedagogical implications of lifelong learning has stimulated some recent research. These include a study being undertaken by the Victorian Office for Teaching and Learning on post-compulsory learning and a study by Jill Sanguinetti and colleagues on pedagogical aspects of the ACE experience. Further research is needed on pedagogical aspects of learning throughout life in many contexts.

Table 1: Characteristics of Traditional and Lifelong Learning Models

Traditional learning	*Lifelong learning*
• The teacher is the source of knowledge.	• Educators are guides to sources of knowledge.
• Learners receive knowledge from the teacher.	• People learn by doing.
• Learners work by themselves.	• People learn in groups and from each other.
• Tests are given to prevent progress until students have completely mastered a set of skills and to ration access to further learning.	• Assessment is used to guide learning strategies and identify pathways for future learning.

[72] OECD 1996, pp.110-111.

• All learners do the same thing.	
• Teachers receive initial training plus ad hoc in-service training.	• Educators develop individualized learning plans. • Educators are lifelong learners. Initial training and ongoing professional development are linked.
• "Good" learners are identified and permitted to continue their education.	• People have access to learning opportunities over a lifetime.

Source: World Bank 2003.

The Concept of Personalised Learning

In the UK, the search for appropriate pedagogies for lifelong learning has been caught up in a national dialogue on the concept of personalised learning. This *National Conversation on Personalised Learning* has its own web site to progress this dialogue (www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/personalisedlearning) with a recent discussion paper focusing the issues.[73]

In this dialogue, personalisation is seen as empowering citizens and putting them at the heart of public services.[74] Personalised learning involves putting the learner at the centre and adapting education provision to individualised need, and the different ways students learn.[75]

A set of principles has been proposed by the UK Department of Education and Skills which include the foundation principle:

> *for children and young people, it means clear learning pathways through the education system and the motivation to become independent e-literate, fulfilled, lifelong learners.*[76]

The concept of personalised learning has implications beyond the school sector.

73 Department for Education and Skills 2004.

74 Ibid, p.4.

75 Ibid, p.5.

76 Ibid, p.5.

The Growing Significance of Informal Learning

Informal learning in many contexts is a key aspect of lifelong learning with a growing significance. It has a particular relevance to the wider benefits of learning in a range of contexts, including workplace learning, building social capital and community building, and in access strategies.

A 2000 Research Brief by the Tavistock Institute provides a useful overview of the links between informal learning and widening participation.[77]

This research overview noted:

- for individuals, informal learning can enable people to "re-package" themselves, by improving their meta-cognitive skills (learning to learn), increasing their self-confidence, and improving their social skill;
- important benefits for community capacity building;
- at a societal level informal learning can contribute to re-shaping notions of and commitment to citizenship, social industry, and social capital;
- informal learning is highly contextualised and tends to provide generic rather than technical outcomes.

Subsequent research by the London University Research Centre on the Wider Benefits of Learning confirmed many of these benefits.[78]

A national survey conducted in Canada in 1998 by the New Approaches to Lifelong Learning network (NALL) also pointed to the growing significance of informal learning.[79] Key conclusions included:

1. Canadian adults were engaged in a vast array of informal learning in relation to their paid employment, housework, community volunteer work and general interest;
2. work related informal learning is much more extensive than participation in education and training courses and programs;

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77 Cullen, J et al 2004.

78 Schuller et al 2004.

79 Livingstone 2002.

3. the incidence of self-reported informal learning appears to have increased over the past 25 years.[80]

The growing significance of informal learning raises the question of how best to link formal, non-formal, and informal modes of learning in building a learning society.

Equity and Disadvantaged Groups

Closely related to the issue of learning strategies for lifelong learning, is the question of ways of empowering disadvantaged individuals and groups as lifelong learners. This is a complex question that is central to building an inclusive learning society.

Successful strategies have been implemented across Australia for various forms of disadvantage, including early school leavers, people with disabilities, Indigenous people, people in remote locations, and the aged, and a knowledge base on good practice is being built up. Examples of these were brought to my notice in my consultations.

Social partnerships, such as the Microsoft/Smith Family Unlimited Potential discussed in Chapter 9 below, afford new ways of concerting action in addressing various forms of disadvantage to learning. Strategies discussed in the chapters that follow, such as Community Learning Partnerships, innovative uses of ICT, and a wide range of partnerships and networks afford ways of extending learning opportunities throughout life for all Australians. Inclusion will best be extended through extending the range and impact of collaborative action directed at building Australia as an inclusive society with opportunities for all.

In my consultations across Australia, I have been particularly impressed by the role of Neighbourhood Houses as a non-threatening access point for the critical initial steps for many returning to learning with low levels of confidence and self-esteem. In some cases action has been taken to strengthen the impact of individual Neighbourhood Houses in broader learning community strategies. A good example is provided by the Yarra Ranges Learning Community where a formal memorandum of understanding has been made between the Shire of Yarra Ranges and a network of sixteen Neighbourhood Houses to progress community learning.

Public libraries are also becoming more significant as access points, as in the Hume Global Learning Village, and I have no doubt that this role of libraries as community learning centres will extend and become even more significant.

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[80] Ibid, p.4.

The key role of technology in extending learning opportunities for disadvantaged individuals and groups is discussed in Chapter 7 below. While achieving digital literacy for all is the essential initial step, a set of case studies recently released by the Department of Communication, Information Technology and the Arts (DCITA) illustrates innovative ways in which ICT is being used to extend learning opportunities for groups subject to various forms of disadvantage.[81] These studies include Indigenous youth, refugees in a public housing estate, women in remote areas, and remote rural communities.

Towards a Framework for Empowering Australians through Learning

Empowering all Australians as lifelong learners involves addressing a complex set of issues. New forms of collaboration and partnership will be required with community learning partnerships (as discussed in Chapter 6 which follows) a key instrument.

In addition, the following concepts discussed above could contribute to this objective:

- adapting a phases of life approach with the learner in the centre;
- ensuring all Australians achieve key generic skills as employability skills, and as essential 21st century literacy for life and work;
- making innovative uses of ICT focused on particular needs, as in the DCITA case studies cited above;
- developing appropriate learning strategies relevant to the needs and interests of people in successive phases of life;
- furthering the critical access roles of community resources such as Neighbourhood Houses and public libraries with linkages to a range of learning pathways;
- building the knowledge base and disseminating information on good practice.

Britain has established national learning targets and it would be desirable to set targets and monitor progress towards their achievement. Canada will also be developing indicators and monitoring progress towards achieving lifelong learning objectives.

[81] DCITA 2005.

The Learning Journey Throughout Life

The concept of lifelong learning conveys an ongoing journey of learning and discovery, and development throughout life in many contexts. The broad and holistic concept of learning discussed above ranges across emotions, values, spiritual and social abilities, as well as cognitive dimensions of learning. As expressed in the Norwegian Background Report for the OECD Review of Lifelong Learning in Norway, "a continuous competence development must have a long-term development perspective for the whole human being".[82] Bringing the whole human being to work, as well as playing an active role as a citizen in society, is now a necessary objective in the context of the dynamic and complex global knowledge society and economy. While there is a range of types of learning, learning as a way of being is fundamental.

[82] OECD 2002, p.30.

6. THE COMMUNITY PILLAR

How learning strategies can be used to engage, sustain, and transform communities.

There is an untold wealth of education opportunities in human communities.

Communities are the heart, the soul, the nervous system, and the lifeblood of human society

Douglas Schuler, 1996.

The impact of the dynamic global knowledge society and economy, with a range of attending social and economic shifts, have drawn attention across Australia to the question of sustaining communities in a world of growing individualisation, exponential change and open borders. While a number of traditional forms of social capital, which bind groups and communities, have declined, new forms of social capital have emerged with the impact of new technologies, so that it is necessary to examine the role of learning strategies in communities in the context of the new dynamics of 21st century communities.

Although Australian communities are subject to the winds of change, there is growing evidence that community learning strategies can be effective in engaging, sustaining, and transforming communities, with such strategies one of the key pillars in building Australia as an inclusive learning society.

While terminology differs with these strategies, they have much in common with community partnerships linked to a shared vision the heart and soul of initiatives. Initiatives differ in the extent to which information and communication technology (ICT) is used as a key instrument to link citizens, organisations and other stakeholders for collaborative action and for sustaining and transforming the community. Smart Communities in Canada and Community Networks around the world provide examples where ICT has a central role.

Building a Learning Culture

Community based initiatives have the advantage that they can be a powerful instrument for building a learning culture in a community. In cases where home and families, schools and colleges, enterprises, cultural institutions, and

community organisations are connected for collaboration and partnership, this can impact on the values of the community and build a culture where learning is valued and promoted throughout life.

Successful innovations, such as the Hume Global Learning Village, Yarra Ranges Learning Communities, and Capricornia Online illustrate this process of cultural change.[83]

The intimate connections between learning and creativity, and the capacity of communities to adapt to changing conditions and seize opportunities is also illustrated by the growing interest in the Creative Community concept.[84] While the arts often play a leading role in such initiatives, this role is closely linked to community learning strategies as initiatives evolve

Social Capital and the Sustainability of Communities

There has been a growing interest in the impact of the drivers of contemporary society on the sustainability of many communities, especially in rural and remote areas. While economic shifts have led to a decline in the wealth of some rural communities, declines in social capital has also loosened the bonds of many communities in a world marked increasingly by individualism and consumerism.[85]

The work of Robert Putnam on "the collapse and revival of American community" with a decline in social capital, has focused attention on the issues involved in sustaining communities in a post-modernist global society. While Putman's data for America shows declines in traditional sources of social capital such as membership of trade unions, church attendance, and volunteering, the subject is controversial and good data has not existed for Australia up to now. Eva Cox in a 2002 overview concluded that membership in many traditional community groups was losing ground with voluntary groups experiencing a decline in membership and with a decline in volunteering. She pointed to a number of contributing indicators which require further analysis.[86]

However, the Australian Bureau of Statistics has been working on indicators for social capital which will be included in social surveys in the future so that trends in communities across Australia will then become clearer. Nevertheless, the available anecdotal evidence points to a decline in many Australian communities,

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83 Brief overviews of the Hume Global Learning Village and Shire of Yarra Range Learning Communities are given over.

84 Adams and Goldband 2001.

85 Schuller 1996, Putman 2000, Cox 2002.

86 Cox 2002.

and to the significance of finding strategies to sustain such communities. In some cases, this will involve considerable cultural change in re-inventing and transforming the community in ways comparable with 21st century conditions.

Learning-based Community Development

The growing recognition of the need to sustain communities in a context where many of the traditional pillars of community are in decline, has led in Australia and overseas to a search for new ways to engage and sustain communities. In some cases, ICT has been used as a tool to build community networks and social capital, while most strategies may be seen as employing learning strategies as an instrument for learning-based community development.

While a broad spectrum of designations is being used, these strategies have much in common in undertaking a stocktake of the current situation, building a shared vision of the desired future, mobilising leadership and forging partnerships to progress this vision, and undertaking specific projects through partnerships.

Examples of such strategies involving community learning partnerships in various forms include:

- Learning Towns in Victoria and Learning Cities in the UK;
- Community Learning Partnerships in Victoria (from 2005) and UK;
- Learning Regions in Germany and other EU countries;
- Smart Communities in Canada and elsewhere;
- Community Networks in America and elsewhere;
- Creative Communities in Western Australia and elsewhere.

While these strategies have much in common, the emphasis and instruments used differ between projects. Smart Communities and Community Networks, for example, use ICT as a tool for community building. In creative communities, it is usual for innovative applications of the arts to be used as a key driver in building a creative culture in communities.[87]

The strategies listed above are discussed in Chapter 8 in the context of partnership and networks to build a learning society. The impact of strategies such as those listed above, and the burgeoning impact of ICT in virtual and place communities, is leading to the emergence of various concepts of "the new community".

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[87] Adams and Goldband 2001.

Schuler, for example, in his overview of new community networks in America sees the "new community" as being distinguished by a number of factors that distinguish it from the traditional community. These are:

- it has a high degree of consciousness and awareness of its identify and attributes;
- it is devoted to democratic problem-solving and is inclusive in its membership;
- the consciousness of the community is both intelligent and creative so that the community is continually looking for new ways to adapt to change;
- these attributes are reflected in the core values of the community?[88]

These features apply, in general, to all the types of community learning initiatives listed above.

In learning communities in Australia, for example, an initial step in building consciousness and awareness is usually for a learning audit to be undertaken by the community as a stocktake of its current learning resources, arrangements, and habits. This approach was adopted, for example, in the ANTA National Learning Community Project in 2001 which I managed for ANTA.

There has been a slow but steady growth of various types of learning communities in Australia since 1998 and there are now over 30 known current initiatives across Australia, with the greatest concentration in Victoria. While there have been few evaluation studies, considerable know-how has been accumulated and a good deal is now known about strategies that work. ALA has a Learning Community Catalyst web site which provides access to information about learning communities (www.lcc.edu.au).

Extending Learning Communities across Australia

The challenge is now to build on this accumulating base of know-how and extend community learning partnerships widely across Australia. There are five main influences that have the potential to drive community learning partnerships across Australia.

These are:

- the burgeoning interest and role of local government;

[88] Schuller 1996.

- a growing interest in the role of civil society;
- the emerging role of ICT including the impact of ICT on civil society;
- the roles of universities, VET, and schools;
- the business and industry role.

Comment follows on these roles.

The Role of Local Government

While few local government councils have been active in community learning initiatives up to now, there is a growing interest and recognition that councils are key stakeholders in strategies that can sustain and develop communities, and that learning processes and strategies can underpin the social, economic, and cultural policies of councils. In addition, council resources such as public libraries, museums, and art galleries can have a key role as community learning centres.

Pioneering work in exploring this potential has been undertaken by a number of Victorian councils which supported the Victorian Learning Towns programs from 2000 to 2005, starting with Wodonga City Council in 1998, while current initiatives such as the Hume Global Learning Village, Yarra Ranges Learning Communities and Salisbury and Marion in Adelaide have been able to build on this foundation.

The Hume Global Learning Village,Yarra Range Learning Communities, Buloke Learning Towns, and Ravenswood Community Gardens provide good examples of innovative work in progress. While Councils were not the prime initiators in the Buloke and Ravenswood projects, these projects illustrate local initiatives that fit well with the social and cultural objectives of local government.

Hume Global Learning Village

The Hume Global Learning Village located in Broadmeadows in northern Melbourne was initiated with the opening of the Global Learning Centre in 2004 comprising a new library, community and training rooms (including ICT training) and a coffee shop. A range of projects have been initiated to involve the community with the Centre serving as a hub of innovation and community building. A Village Forum provides for community views. An advisory board provides for expert advice while Hume City Council strongly supports the initiative in a range of ways.

Yarra Ranges Learning Communities

The Shire of Yarra Range Vision 2020 community plan included a vision for Yarra Ranges to be a "Living and Learning Community". This vision has led to action to develop the Shire as a network of learning communities with a focus on three key themes: Learning for Individuals; Learning to Create Sustainable Communities; and Learning to Create a Sustainable Shire. A number of objectives have been identified to be progressed in each of these areas.

Partnership building has been a key feature of this initiative. This has included forging a partnership strategy cemented through a formal MOU between the Council and a network of twelve Neighbourhood Houses. Promotion of learning is a feature of this initiative. Further information is available on the Shire web site (www.yarraranges.vic.gov.au).

Buloke Learning Towns

The Buloke Learning Towns, located in Buloke Shire in North West Victoria, has been funded under the Victorian Learning Towns program since 2000. Buloke Shire comprises a number of small rural communities in five towns with populations between 600 and 1,200 people, and five smaller communities.

A wide range of activities have been initiated to promote learning in the Shire. These include the Learning Festival conducted during Adult Learners Week, the extension of public internet and computer access to every town in the Shire, a Depression Awareness Community Project, a healthy lifestyle walking program, and collaboration with Landcare.

A feature of the Buloke initiative has been the range of partnership projects with community organisations to extend learning activities into fields such as health and environment so as to extend the wider benefits of learning. Buloke Learning Towns demonstrates what can be achieved through community learning partnerships in small rural communities.

Ravenswood Community Gardens

Ravenswood Community Garden is located in a suburb of Launceston where unemployment is three times the national average, and with only 5 per cent of the residents having participated in further education or training. The Garden provides a friendly, welcoming environment where people of all ages come together to learn a wide range of skills, and to contribute to the further development of the Garden.

The programs of the Garden include:

- Working Away - where individuals work in teams on problem solving as a gateway back to education.
- Community Volunteers - people from all walks of life are encouraged to learn.
- School Groups - activities directed to build teamwork, leadership, and social responsibility outside a classroom environment.
- Work for the Dole - focusing on the local residents and reconnecting to their communities.

(www.ravcomgarden@yahoo.com.au)

The broad basis of initiatives stimulated by current learning community initiatives is illustrated by the evaluation framework in Figure 5 developed by Ian Nichols and Dr Leonie Wheeler for the evaluation of the Hume Global Learning Village. The range of the eight themes and fifty six projects brought into this evaluation framework is extensive, and demonstrates the ambitious nature of the Hume innovation.

Councils are key stakeholders in building inclusive learning communities able to adapt to change, and it is reasonable to expect a major expansion of council initiatives over the next few years. How to support such initiatives is a key question for governments and other stakeholders such as ALA and ALGA.

Council libraries should be seen as community learning centres with the potential to take a key leadership role in initiating and sustaining community learning projects. Professional associations such as ALIA can have a key role in promoting good practice and new ideas. Both the Council of Australian State Libraries and ALIA indicated their strong support for lifelong learning objectives in submissions to this project.

The Role of Civil Society

A spectrum of issues bearing on local communities has given a prominence to the role of civil society. Civil society is generally regarded as comprising community organisations and groups, and is sometimes seen as the third sector in society.[89]

The growing penetration of ICT into community organisations is increasing the effectiveness of these organisations, and enabling networks of non-government organisations to collaborate for common purposes. This trend can be expected to accelerate with the growing influence of ICT in the sector.

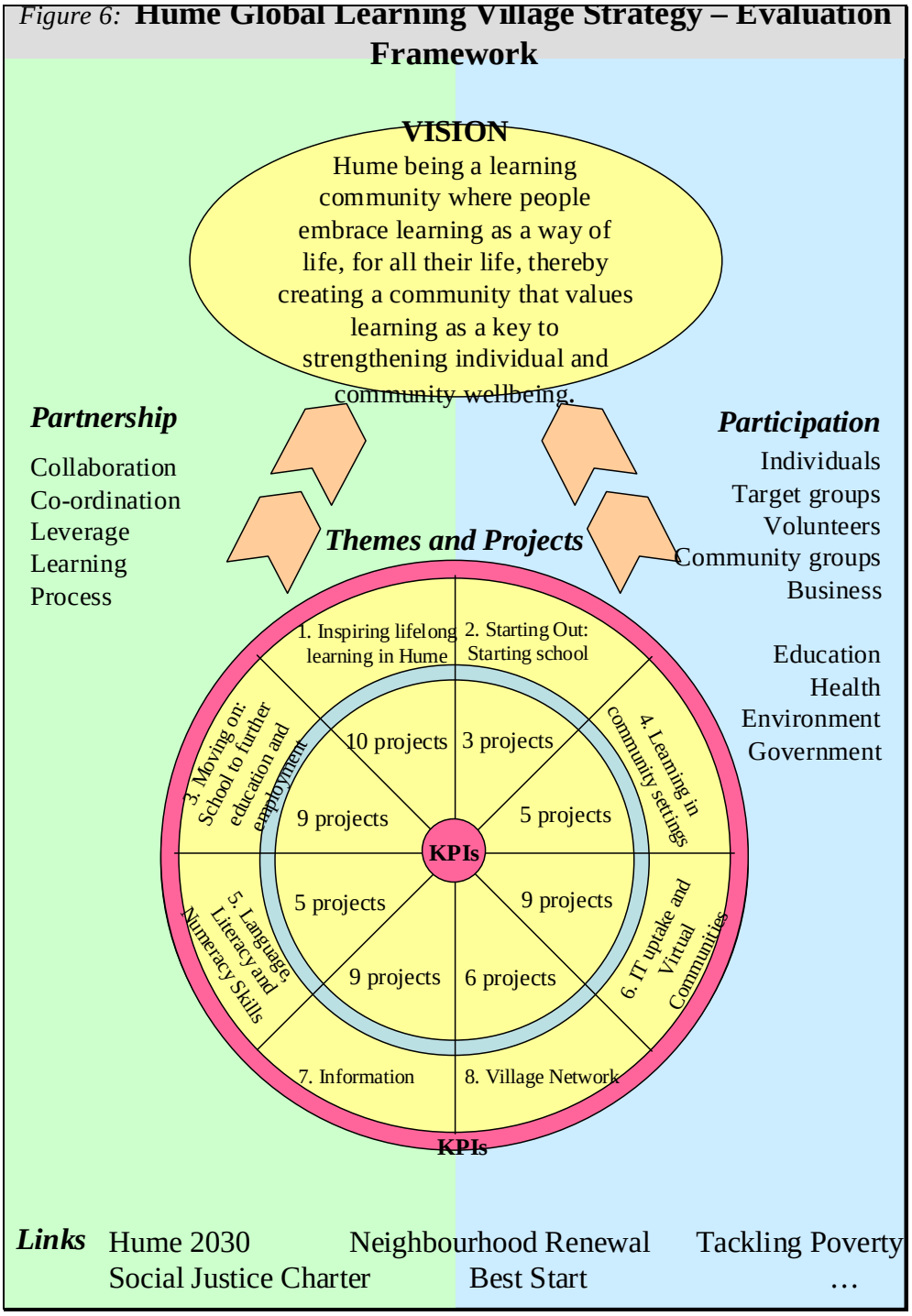
A current project, funded by the Department of Communication, Information Technology and the Arts (DCITA) and undertaken by the Monash University Centre for Community Network Research, is examining issues relating to an Information Economy Strategy for Australian Civil Society. A Draft Information Economy Strategy for Australian Civil Society prepared by the Roundtable for Australian Civil Society for this project provides a valuable source of ideas and linkages between ICT development, civil society, building social capital, and progressing towards a learning society.[90]

Overall, it is reasonable to expect that civil society will be a more significant player in community learning partnerships in the future with this role facilitated by the outcomes of the Information Economy Strategy for Australian Civil Society.

89 Schuler 1996.

90 Schuler et al 2005, p.2.

Figure 6: **Hume Global Learning Village Strategy – Evaluation Framework**



The Role of ICT

While the evolving impact of ICT on civil society illustrates the growing potential of ICT, it is also likely that technology will enable and facilitate innovative partnerships of government, business, education institutions, and non-profit organisations to drive learning and community building.

Recent case studies funded by DCITA illustrate some of the emerging patterns of impact on communities[91] which are building social capital.

A few examples include:

- **Atherton Gardens** where a non-profit organisation brokered a diverse alliance of partners to support learning and skill development in a public housing estate;
- **Capricornia Online** where a partnership between Rockhampton City Council and Central Queensland University has progressed from an initial focus on fostering digital literacy to supporting a range of online communities in fields such as fishing, gardening, and multicultural voices;
- **dEadly mOb** where online communities of Indigenous young people are being built up from a base at the Gap Youth Centre in Alice Springs;
- **Online WA Multicultural Communities** where ethnic community organisations are being assisted to establish their own websites;
- **Wyndham Telecentre** where the telecentre serves a number of community building roles in a remote community in the Kimberleys, including producing the local community newspaper.[92]

The DCITA case studies illustrate a range of ways in which ICT based initiatives are building bonding and bridging forms of social capital in communities. A broad spectrum of virtual communities is emerging, in some cases linked to place. How to link place and virtual communities so as to extend learning opportunities and build community is a key challenge that is discussed in Chapter 9.

Overseas, the experience of Canada in using ICT for community building under the Smart Communities program demonstrates this potential in a diverse range of community contexts, including remote communities, as in the Smart Labrador project.

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91 Ibid.

92 DCITA 2005 c.

Technology is clearly a key tool for building and sustaining communities, and for progressing Australia as an inclusive learning society. The challenge is to achieve the best fit and interaction between community, technology, and learning objectives.

The Roles of Universities, VET and Schools

While it has not been usual up to now for universities, VET institutions, and schools to initiate learning community projects, it is likely that this will become a more common feature in the future in an environment shaped by the drivers discussed in Chapter 2.

Some current developments that point to this development include:

- the recent establishment of the Australian Universities Community Engagement Alliance (AUCEA);
- inclusion of the VET role in serving communities in the ANTA National Strategy for 2004-2010;
- a growing interest in ways in which social capital is formed, including the roles of education institutions;

AUCEA is auspiced by the University of Western Sydney and will enable Australian universities to create and share knowledge about community engagement. This will be important in building the knowledge base on community building.

While few examples exist to date where an education institution has been the prime mover in a community learning project, the role of Victoria University in the initiation and development of Learning and Innovation West in Western Melbourne provides a good example of this potential.

Learning and Innovation West

Victoria University in 2003, with the support of the Western Region Economic Development Organisation (WREDO), engaged a consultant to undertake consultations and test support for a possible Western Melbourne Learning and Innovation Region. The consultant found considerable support for this idea so that the Kearns report *Growing Western Melbourne Together*, recommended that this project should be implemented with priority objective aimed at social, economic, educational, and cultural development in the region.

The project was initiated in 2004, with support from a range of partners, with 2004 devoted to developing an Action Plan, Victoria University has continued to service the project. A number of project proposals were developed for government funding. Learning and Innovation West sees its role as strategically mobilising partnerships and activities in Western Melbourne, identifying the gaps in learning, and advocating learning as a means of community transformation.

While few examples like Learning and Innovation West exist in Australia as yet, there are substantial resources in education institutions that could be applied in leadership roles in building community learning partnerships.

Overseas, educational institutions have been active players in initiatives such as Learning Regions and Learning Cities. A recent example is provided in the UK by the joint initiative of the Higher Education Funding Council of England, the Learning and Skills Council, and the Department for Education and Skills for the development of Lifelong Learning Networks involving collaboration between universities and further education colleges in a region. This initiative is discussed in Chapter 8 below.

The potential for collaboration and partnership between all education sectors in Learning Region initiatives is substantial, and incentives need to be provided for such projects. Well planned Learning Region initiatives can provide a valuable framework to integrate social, economic, and social objectives.

Learning Strategies and Engaging Communities

A recent surge of interest across Australia in the question of how best to engage and sustain communities is reflected in the establishment of new government agencies, a number of conferences on this subject (including an international conference to be held in Brisbane in August), and the funding of innovative

projects. With the centrality of learning strategies for sustaining and transforming communities, much will be gained by active consideration later in 2005 of how best to align these interests - including the emerging role of local government councils in supporting community partnerships, as in the examples cited in this report.

There is a growing international knowledge base on successful learning strategies that could be applied in concerted action to benefit communities across Australia. How to achieve such partnership action merits early consideration by stakeholders.

Creative Communities and Learning Communities

The concept of creative communities has attracted interest in a context where the capability of communities to be innovative in adapting to change, and in some cases transforming the nature of the community, has been central. The work of Florida on *The Rise of the Creative Class*[93] adds a further dimension in terms of lifestyle that attracts and retains creative people.

The concepts of creative communities and learning communities share much in common, with learning processes the engine to drive innovation in communities and adapting to change and seizing opportunities. This convergence also points to the important role that the arts can play in building innovative learning communities with quality lifestyle. Building a creative culture in Australian communities should be seen as a constructive contribution to the national innovation agenda.

[93] Florida 2003.

Key Messages

1. Building community learning partnerships of various kinds is a key pillar in achieving Australia as an inclusive learning society.

2. A spectrum of models have now been developed in Australia and overseas which now need to be extended to communities across Australia. How best to do this is a central challenge.

3. Local government councils are key stakeholders in collaborative community learning and will be increasingly key players in learning community initiatives.

4. Information and communication technology is opening new ways to build social capital and community and should be harnessed with learning strategies.

5. Other key drivers of the community pillar of an Australian learning society will be the growing interest in the role of civil society and the roles of universities, colleges, schools, and ACE.

7. THE TECHNOLOGY PILLAR

How technology will transform the way we learn.

> *The growth of digital applications in education has given rise to the term e-learning, which exploits interactive technologies and communication systems to improve the learning experience. It has the potential to transform the way we teach and learn across the board. It can raise standards and widen participation in lifelong learning.*
>
> Spring 2004, p.3

There has been a persistent theme in international discussions of the impact of information and communication technology on learning that technology will transform the way we learn.[94] At the same time, there is a general recognition that this has not happened yet, and that the full potential of technology to progress learning throughout the community has not yet been realised.

While a number of embedded barriers are impeding the realisation of the full potential of technology to progress learning in many contexts, the impact of technology on learning in a range of contexts has already been impressive. These contexts include e-learning in the workplace and elsewhere, family learning in the home, and learning activities in common interest groups of various kinds.

Although technology has the power and potential to foster new learning environments and forms of learning, much of the policy effort up to now has focussed on access objectives in addressing the so called digital divide in society and ensuring that all Australians possess essential digital skills and literacy.

This is a necessary initial phase of development, but a key question is what lies beyond the access phase in harnessing the potential of technology in building a learning society. As Spring observed in his report on *Australia's Future Using Education Technology:*

[94] Kearns 2002, World Bank 36 p28-29.

> *We are on the cusp of the first major shift in teaching and learning methodology for hundreds of years, where it could be available for anyone, anytime, anywhere.*[95]

Beyond Access

While achieving a base of digital literacy for all is a necessary first step in harnessing the potential of technology for community and business purposes, the full potential of technology to transform the way we learn and relate to each other will only be achieved in strategies where technology serves as a tool for larger purposes. As Sprint observes:

> *the real secret to charting a successful course in cyberspace lies less in the paradigm of technology than in the construct of community.*[96]

Seen in the way, technology extends the reach of communication and learning contexts and can "enrich and multiply the contexts for meaningful personal and commercial transitions, and provide us with the opportunity to participate more fully and freely in society.[97]

As a tool of lifelong learning, ICT can:

- extend learning environments to contexts such as the home, workplace, clubs, cultural institutions;
- build online learning communities regardless of the constraints of time and place;
- harness the workplace as a key learning environment;
- be targeted at the needs and interests of particular disadvantaged groups;
- bring global perspectives to learning with communities to resources around the world.

Innovative examples are emerging across Australia and overseas where ICT is used as a tool of broader learning, community, and business objectives. Some good examples are provided in case studies recently published by the Department of Communication, Information Technology and the Arts linked to discussion papers on the role of ICT in building communities and social capital, and in

95 Spring 2004, p.17.
96 Sprint 1998 (in Tapscott) p.296.
97 Ibid, p.298.

transforming communities and the lives of people[98], which are discussed in Chapter 6 above.

Examples are given in Chapter 6 from the DICTA case studies of innovative uses of ICT in building social capital and community in a high rise public housing estate, a regional community, a network of Indigenous young people, in multicultural communities across Western Australia, and with a telecentre as a hub of community building in a remote town in the Kimberleys.

Other examples in the DCITA case studies show how ICT is being used to link common interest communities, support and connect community organisations, and transform service delivery. There is no doubt that the impact will widen and deepen as further experience is gained and shared in community building uses of ICT.

Overseas examples include:

- **British Wired Communities** where ICT has been extended to disadvantaged communities to extend opportunities and build community[99];
- **American Community Networks** such as the Seattle Community Networks which advance a range of community objectives[100];
- **Comprehensive ICT frameworks** such as the American Liberty Net system based in Philadelphia which incorporates a spectrum of online networks such as the Philadelphia Unemployment Project[101];
- **Canadian Smart Communities** where ICT is used as a tool of community building in a range of contexts, eg Smart Labrador, Smart Capital (Ottawa), and Manitobar Smart Network[102];

ICT as a Tool for Transforming Communities

Canadian experience with Smart Community Demonstration Projects since 1999 has shown how ICT can be used as a tool for transforming communities when aligned with learning and community building strategies.

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98 DCITA 2005c, 2005a, 2005b.

99 This program ran from 2000 to 2003 and has a website for information www.dfes.gov.uk/wired/index.shtml.

100 Schuler 1996, pp.29-41.

101 Ibid, p.191.

102 http:/198.103.246.28/demoprojects.

An overview by the sponsoring department, Industry Canada, has pointed to ways in which communities are being transformed economically, socially, and culturally.[103] Some examples include the following:

- In Smart Labrador, videoconferencing has changed the way health services are delivered to remote communities with a supportive, affordable network of practitioners and patients evolving.
- In Nova Scotia, business opportunities have been expanded through one-on-one mentoring in e-business delivered online.
- In British Columbia, the Smart Choices Project has achieved the most extensive and successful community engagement process in the community's history with disparate groups now dialoguing.

The Department of Communication, Information Technology and the Arts case studies on ICT and social capital show similar impacts of ICT on communities, although the timescale is shorter in most examples. Overall, there is a compelling case to align ICT, learning strategies, and community building in innovative approaches to sustaining and transforming communities.

While learning objectives are being promoted in e-learning strategies through initiatives such as the Flexible Learning Advisory Group (FLAG) in the VET sector, e-learning development is seldom aligned with the promotion of e-business in communities and enterprises.

However, the holistic integration of social, economic, cultural, and educational objectives in comprehensive lifelong learning strategies brings a requirement to foster alignment of the promotion of e-learning and e-business. There could be substantial benefits to business and industry, and hence to communities.

Broad community and business frameworks, such as Capricornia Online and Liberty Net provides frameworks for this to happen. While a number of wired community initiatives exist in Australia, these usually focus on business development, and the frontier of learning throughout life has seldom been brought into these initiatives. This is an area where some good practice exemplars are needed for highlighting future directions.

Strategic Framework for the Information Economy 2004-2006

The Australian Government has issued *Australia's Strategic Framework for the Information Economy 2004-2006* to provide a framework for addressing the opportunities and challenges of the Information Economy. This document defines the information economy in the following terms:

[103] See htt;://198.103.246.211/results_e.asp.

> *The information economy was the term adopted by the Australian Government in 1997 to describe the transformation of economic and social activities by information and communication technologies (ICT). An information economy is one where information, knowledge and education are major inputs to business and social activity. It is not a separate new economy - it is an economy in which the rapid development and diffusion of ICT-based innovation is transforming all sectors and all aspects of society.*[104]

Defined in this way, the concept of the information economy has much in common with the notion of a knowledge society and economy, and also with the concept of a learning society. The concept of a learning society is, however, broader in that it encompasses the society as well as economy with ICT seen as one of the tools for building a learning society.

Nevertheless, there are significant areas of overlap, and it is highly desirable that connections are made both in progressing Australia's information economy and in building a learning society to drive this process. The four priorities set for 2004-2006 all have relevance to lifelong learning and building a learning society.

MCEETYA and AICTEC

MCEETYA in February 2005 issued a Joint Statement on Education and Training in the Information Economy which recognises that "new technologies are transforming our societies: the way we work, our social and community life and the way we learn."[105] This statement rightly recognises that national collaboration is essential to achieve a vision where ICT will transform education and training, and contribute to economic and social prosperity.

The objectives set out in this Joint Statement are seen as driving this social and economic transformation.

- Creating an innovative society.
- Ensuring that all learners achieve their potential.
- Improving quality and raising standards.
- Achieving efficiencies through sharing.
- Capitalising on the internationalisation of education.[106]

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104 Australian Government 2004.

105 MCEETYA 2005.

106 Ibid.

Innovative strategies will be needed to underpin all these objectives so that the MCEETYA Information Economy vision should be seen as an important building block in achieving Australia as a learning society. An Action Plan to be released later in 2005 will set out the collaborative action to be taken across the education sectors to progress this vision.

Evolving Policy Directions

The promotion of business, educational, and community opportunities of ICT has been undertaken through a number of federal and State government initiatives. At a national level, these include the Government's Strategic Framework for the Information Economy 2004-2006, and the technology strategies set for the education sectors through the collaborative Australian Information and Communications Technology in Education Committee (AICTEC) under the umbrella of MCEETYA. In addition, a Draft Information Economic Strategy for Australian Civil Society adds a further dimension to collaborative action.

Draft Information Economy Strategy for Australian Civil Society

The Draft Strategy is valuable for the broad approach it takes which seeks to link technology with the strengthening of civil society, building social capital, progressing towards a learning society, and the functioning of Australia as a free, pluralist democracy.[107] These are linkages which should underpin discussion of learning strategies and processes in Australian society.

The Draft Strategy recognises the magnitude of keeping pace with technology which is seen as requiring "an enhanced capacity for collective action".[108] The Draft Strategy recognises the core role of learning in the contribution of civil society to Australian social and economic development, including combating isolation and disadvantage.[109] There is a useful discussion of the need to develop, implement, and monitor realistic standards for information literacy, civic literacy, lifelong and lifewide learning.[110]

Overall, the Draft Strategy is valuable for the links it makes between technology and social and economic development, including cultural change and sustaining communities.

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107 Schauder 2005.

108 Ibid, p.18.

109 Ibid, p.16.

110 Ibid, pp.16-17.

These vital connections between desirable workplace attributes and cultural change over time are discussed in the following terms:

> *The skills and habits of co-operation and constructive interdependence cannot be created in the workplace alone, they are part of a wider and deeper cultural patterning that forms over generations in society as a whole, and that plays a major role in creating meaning in individual lives. In all societies - even autocratic societies - this sense of meaning arises largely from the institutions of civil society even if these are limited to the most basic and pervasive of civil society institutions, namely family and religion.*[111]

This argument fits well with the conceptual model adopted for this study which links human, social, and identity capital. Its outcomes may be observed in the characteristics of Nordic countries such as Sweden, Finland, and Denmark which have invested heavily in lifelong learning policies and strategies over some decades, and which are discussed in Appendix 2.

Recent international assessments such as the OECD PISA assessments of school performance in reading, mathematics, and science,[112] and the World Economic Forum's Global Information Technology Report on the implementation of ICT, where these Nordic countries have rated in the top group in these assessments, suggest a link between the performance outcomes and the heavy investments made by these countries in education and lifelong learning.[113]

Convergence of Technology, Community and Learning Strategies

The general argument of the Draft Information Economic Strategy for Australian Civil Society points to a necessary convergence of technology, community, and learning strategies. There are already some indications of such a convergence as, for example, in the DCITA case studies. This trend should be actively promoted, and will be a key influence in building Australia as an inclusive learning society.

While the convergence of technology and community strategies is being driven by such concepts as the social appropriation of technology,[114] community learning strategies (as, for example, in learning communities/towns) are less frequently

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111 Ibid, p.15.

112 OECD 2003c

113 In the March 2005 Global Information Technology Report Iceland was ranked second, Finland third, Denmark fourth, and Sweden sixth with Singapore first and the United States fifth.

114 Capricornia Online in the DCITA case studies provides a good example.

brought into this confluence of concepts and action. As Johansson observes in his analysis of the "Medici effect:, breakthrough insights occur at the intersection of ideas, concepts, and cultures.[115]

Whole-of-government strategies are needed which promote the intersection of ideas on community, technology, and learning. This suggests the need for a new generation of learning communities which build on insights from the three fields.

Actively promoting a convergence of technology, community, and learning strategies will lead to developments such as the following:

- community technology centres (including telecentres) will develop further as community learning centres;
- virtual networks of various kinds will contribute more fully to enriching learning and community building in communities across Australia;
- public community centres such as libraries will have a key role in driving this convergence in communities.

A recent evaluation of Western Australian Telecentres showed how the roles of these Telecentres had evolved towards a broader community function. It is likely that this evolution of role will continue in the direction of serving as community learning centres. Much would be gained from national support for the further development of this role, as is argued in the Draft Information Economy Strategy for Australian Civil Society, [116] and in Spring's report on *Australia's Future Using Education Technology*[117].

Sharing Good Ideas

New ideas will be required in progressing the role of technology to a new stage of development in building Australia as an inclusive learning society. Frameworks such as AITEC and FLAG provide for sharing good ideas within the education sectors. Similar frameworks are needed for the community and workplace contexts.

An interesting model that has evolved to share new ideas on the technology role in education is provided by the ICT League which is an informal network of policy members and experts in the Nordic countries (Norway, Sweden, Finland, Iceland,

115 Johansson 2004.

116 Schauder 2005, p.29.

117 Spring 2004, p.30. Spring recommends creating a national education and training e-learning framework.

and Denmark), Canada and the Netherlands.[118] The focus of the League is an issues which arise after the basic requirements for ICT in education have been met (hardware, software, Internet connections and basic teacher professional development). This orientation brings a focus on pedagogical issues in the use of ICT and "the real development of seamless e-learning"[119]. International projects between the members of the League carry forward this policy of the future role of technology in education and learning strategies.

There will be value in a similar on-going dialogue involving Australian stakeholders that extended into the many contexts of learning throughout life.

Key Messages

1. Technology will transform the way we learn but the full potential of technology in building a learning society has not yet been realised.

2. While the focus of policy up to now has been an access objectives in addressing the digital divide so that all Australians achieve digital literacy, a new stage of development will focus on harnessing the full potential of technology for social, educational, and economic development.

3. Technology can be used to extend learning environments to contexts such as the home, workplace, clubs, and cultural institutions.

4. ICT can be harnessed as a tool to transform communities.

5. The Draft Information Economy Strategy for Australian Civil Society points to desirable directions in empowering civil society through technology while the MCEETYA Joint Statement articulates the contribution of the education sectors.

6. A key requirement is to promote the convergence of technology, community and learning strategies through

118 Mann 2004.

119 Ibid.

whole-of-government approaches and an active dialogue in sharing good ideas, both within Australia and with international trends.

8. THE WORKPLACE AND ECONOMIC PILLAR

Why the workplace needs to be developed as a key learning environment in building Australia as an inclusive learning society with business an active partner in this great enterprise.

> *…tomorrow will bring change and will likely render the current bases of skill obsolete. The only fundamentally important skill is the ability to learn.*
>
> Leonard, *Wellspring of Knowledge,* 1998

> *… so should training and development gracefully move towards its new focus on learning.*
>
> Rosabeth Moss Kanter, 1994

> *To participate in the emerging knowledge economy, people need to update their skills continuously. Lifelong learning will thus become a norm.*
>
> World Bank 2003.

> *It is true that economic and social objectives have long been seen as distinct and often competing. But this is a false dichotomy, it represents an increasingly obsolete perspective in a world of open, knowledge-based competition.*
>
> Michael Porter and Mark Kramer, 2002

The impact and implications of the global knowledge economy has led to a situation where firms in many industries need a capability for continuous innovation and a workforce with the capacity to learn, adapt to change, and to be innovative. In this context, business and industry are vital stakeholders in the promotion of lifelong learning in Australia, and in achieving the aspiration of Australia as a competitive learning society with a vigorous learning culture .

It is widely recognised that the shifts and re-structuring of industry associated with the impact of the global knowledge economy have led to the emergence of new competitive factors and standards for success.[120] Harvard professors John Kotter and Rosabeth Kanter, Charles Handy and Peter Drucker among others have led in exploring this new terrain with new realities, new responses, and certain essential underpinnings.[121] A capability for lifelong learning in the workforce is widely

[120] See Kotter 1995.

[121] Kotter 1994, Handy 2001, Drucker 1994.

recognised as an essential underpinning in a context of exponential change where staff are often required to work in ambiguous contexts, learn new ways, and be innovative.

The impact of the drivers discussed in this report has led to changes in the way many firms operate and use staff, in the attributes required in staff, and in the concepts that guide business policy.[122] Changes such as the downsizing of firms and outsourcing of functions, along with the "disappearing middle"[123] have brought a requirement for business to rethink human resource policy and strategy, along with new dimensions in the corporate and social responsibility of industry. It is good business for industry to be an active partner in building Australian society with a motivation and capability for lifelong learning, and with the capacity for creative and innovative initiatives. Long term strategic perspectives are required in this re-assessment of business interests.

These contextual shifts have enhanced the significance of the workplace as a context for learning, while the impact of technology with growing interest in the role of e-learning has provided opportunities for new approaches to workplace learning.

These shifts have gone along with the aspiration in many leading firms that all employees should be seen as knowledge workers, a view that Bill Gates and other business leaders advocate.[124] This position is embedded in strategies to redesign work into processes that empower people and enhance creativity and innovation in the workplace. Building learning strategies into such work processes is a necessary underpinning in fostering a culture in the workplace that drives on-going innovation and a capability to adapt to change, including responding to the impact of disruptive technologies that overturn current business paradigms.[125]

Developments such as these have led to a growing recognition of the significance of improved learning in the workplace. For example, a major Canadian national survey found a vast array of informal learning activities in the workplace (and also in the home, community, voluntary activities, and individual interests) with informal learning much more extensive than participation in adult education courses and programs.[126] The Canadian Research Network on the Changing

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122 See Handy 2001.

123 Handy 2001.

124 Gates, p.317.

125 Christiansen 2003.

126 Livingstone 2002.

Nature of Work and Lifelong Learning has followed up on these research findings with an active research program.[127] Similar research is needed in Australia with industry as an active partner.

International experience in the evaluation of the implications of the shifts associated with the global knowledge economy points to the following implications:

- Learning has a new significance for business and industry in adapting to change, generating new knowledge, and fostering a capability for continuous innovation and creativity
  - This requires building an adaptive learning culture[128]
- A contemporary approach is to view firms as open learning systems with skill development seen in terms of skillecosystems[129]
  - Experiential learning in the work place is now central
- There is a shift in leading OECD countries from a training paradigm to a learning paradigm for on-going skill development[130]
  - The American Work Learning Performance Approach discussed below is typical
- Key generic skills are recognised as vital for maintaining the competence and employability of staff
  - These should also be seen as life and innovation skills[131]
  - Individual autonomy has also become more significant in new forms of work organisation
- A capacity for ongoing learning is necessary to underpin continuous innovation. Learning to learn is the core competence for business.
- Networks and work teams are assuming an enhanced significance.

These implications of the new context for business and industry require new approaches to building and maintaining the capability of the workforce for learning throughout life. Business should be an active partner in exploring

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127 See WALL and Centre for the Study of Work and Lifelong Learning.

128 Kotter and Heskell.

129 ANTA is currently funding a skillecosystem project managed by the NSW Board of Vocational Education and Training.

130 Kearns 2004.

131 Kearns 2004, p.46.

innovative 21st century approaches to skill and workforce development, underpinned by a capability for lifelong learning. The abolition of ANTA from mid 2005 provides an opportunity for a major re-appraisal of how best to progress these objectives.

The Central Dilemma

The context of the dynamic technology driven knowledge economy brings a number of acute dilemmas for both employers and the workforce. At the centre is the dilemma posed by structural changes in work with such developments as downsizing, outsourcing, and the disappearance of the middle.

This dilemma was articulated by economist Lester Thurow in this following terms:

> *The result has been the gradual destruction of existing on-the-job training systems. In an environment without lifetime careers and lifetime employees who invests in what skills? How does the employee know what skills to acquire? How do employers ensure they find the skills they need?*[132]

It is clear that reliance on an entry-level training system is not an adequate answer to this dilemma in a context of exponential change, and that the only effective response is the development of a lifelong learning system in which all stakeholders are partners. This is a challenge for business, the workforce, the education system, and government.

Ageing of the Workforce

The significance of these issues for business and industry is enhanced by demographic change with the ageing of the workforce. This will lead to continuing skill shortages unless strategic action is taken. Issues such as maintaining older workers in employment assume a new significance in this context.

The implications of demographic change for industry and for Australian society overall were reviewed in a recent Productivity Commission report on the Economic Implications of an Ageing Australia which pointed to the serious implications of an ageing workforce with likely lower labour force participation rates and skill shortages.[133] A further study by Encel for the Australian Business Council and ACTU paints a similar future.[134]

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132 Thurow, p.132.

133 Productivity Commission 2005.

134 Encel 2003.

While a package of measures will be required in response to the challenge of demographic change, a short-term training approach will not be adequate as a means of maintaining motivation, the currency of skill, and employability of older workers. Rather, a strategic investment by all stakeholders in strategies that foster learning throughout working life is more likely to be effective in motivating and enabling other workers to remain in the workforce, whether on a casual, part-time, or full-time basis.

The emerging lifestyle for many, that Charles Handy has called portfolio lifestyle,[135] will require more holistic and integrated strategies than have been the case up to now, with more connections developed between the workplace and community. Industry will be a key stakeholder in building such a learning society with a critical interest in ensuring that the necessary long-term investments are made. In this context, effective policies will build social and identity capital, as well as human capital, in strategies increasingly holistic and integrated.

The Shift from Training to Learning

The dynamic knowledge economy is driving a shift from a training paradigm to a learning paradigm for human resource and workforce development in leading firms around the world. In a context of exponential change, ongoing learning is necessary to adapt to change, innovate, and maintain the competitive position of the firm.

This imperative has also been recognised by governments in leading OECD countries. The search for a new 21st century paradigm for human resource development is discussed in a report prepared for ANTA by the author of this paper which provides an overview of international developments in VET.[136]

A key aspect of this shift in a number of systems involves an attempt to integrate learning and skill strategies in more comprehensive and holistic approaches to enhancing and maintaining skill throughout working life. This subject is discussed in Chapter 9 which follows. Overviews of strategies adopted in selected countries, and in the European Union, were given in Chapter 3.

The WLP Approach

The human resource policies of leading American firms also illustrate the emerging paradigm shift with the influential American Society for Training and Development (ASTD) adopting a work, learning, and performance approach to

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135 Handy.

136 Kearns 2004.

human resource development since 1999.[137] This approach is illustrated in Figure 7.

The WLP approach advocated by ASTD includes the following features:

- it includes informal learning as well as formal provision;
- the concept goes beyond individuals learning to encompass organizational learning;
- the concept explicitly connects learning to the improvement of individual, group, and organizational performance.[138]

In the WLP approach, "learning is defined as a transformational agent that drives organizational performance through the development of individual and organizational knowledge and expertise".[139] This approach has much in common with the workforce development strategy being implemented in South Australia, and also being promoted in America by the Department of Labor. It is necessary for business and industry to progress beyond the traditional training paradigm for skill development to new models that link workplace learning more integrally and strategically with the changing nature of work, business strategies, and performance outcomes.

Organizational Learning

A key aspect of the WLP approach developed by ASTD, is that the concept of learning extends beyond individual's learning to encompass organizational learning.[140] Sugrue, O'Driscoll, and Blair in their overview of the WLP strategy define organizational learning in the following terms:

> *Organizational learning is the collective wisdom or human capital that an organization gains from the learning of its individuals. Organizational learning manifests itself in process and product improvements.*[141]

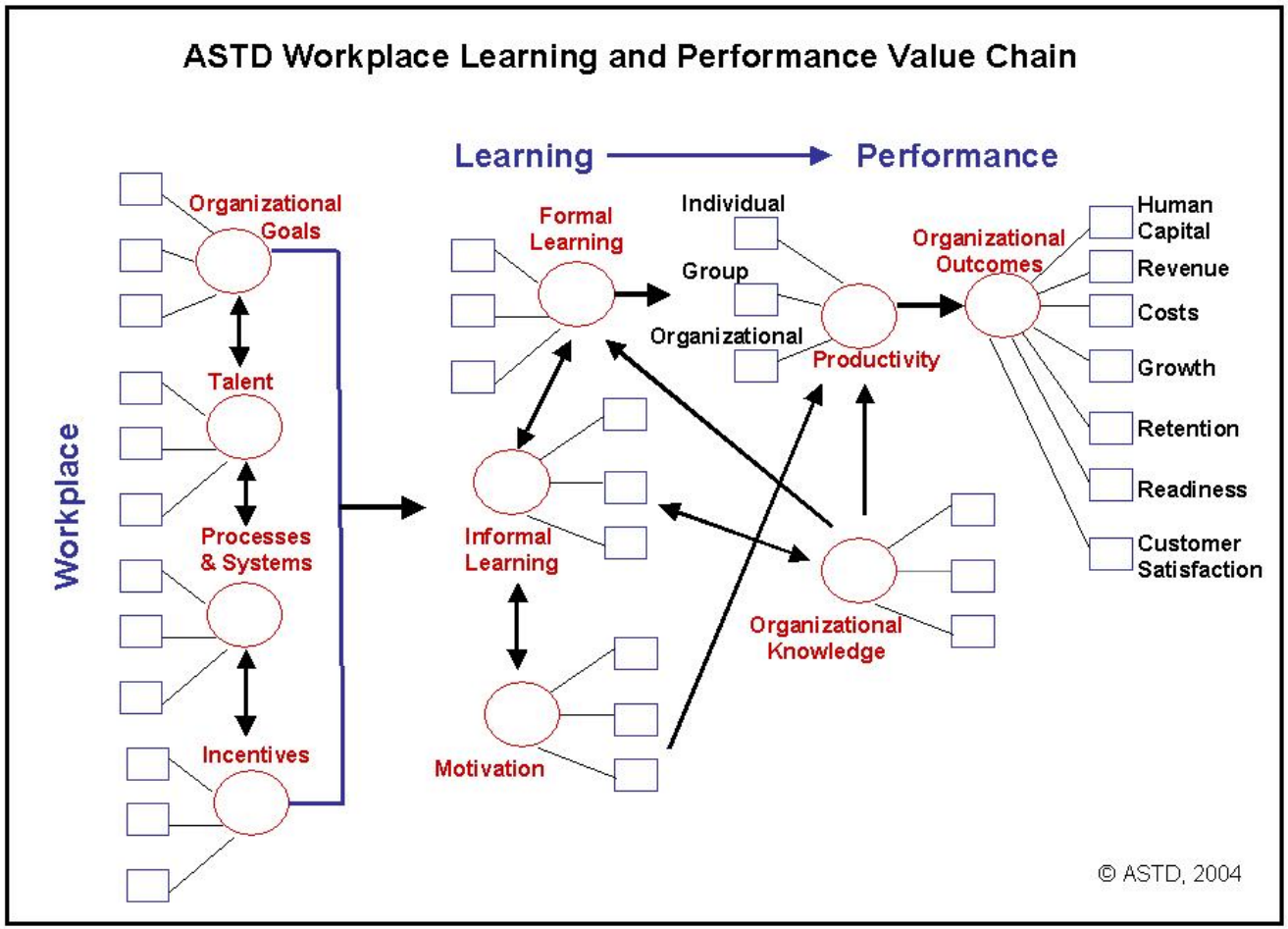
137 ASTD T & D January 2005, pp.51-52.

138 Sugrue, O'Driscoll & Blair 2005, p.51.

139 Ibid, p.51.

140 Ibid, p.51.

141 Ibid, p.51.



Source: Sugrue, B., O'Driscoll, T., and Blair, D. (2005). What in the world is WLP? ASTD T+D magazine, January.

The links between organizational learning and the capability of a firm for continuous innovation have been established in a number of studies. OECD, for example in its three year study of cities and regions in the new learning economy concluded that "it is organizational learning which relates most directly to the key processes of innovation.".[142]

The roles of individual and organisational learning in the generation of new knowledge by firms has also been examined by Nonaka and Takeuchi in their work on the knowledge-creating company. The role of learning by doing in building tacit knowledge needs to be built into organisational learning strategies so that individual learning is captured in the knowledge spiral leading to new knowledge and innovation for the firm.[143]

This growing body of evidence suggests the significance of both individual workplace learning and organisational learning for firms in the context of the competitive knowledge economy. Australian business is a key stakeholder in the process of achieving a learning revolution in Australian society and building a culture which facilitates and supports individual and organizational learning in firms.

Technology and Workplace Learning

One of the main drivers for strengthened workplace learning exists in the role of technology in enabling new forms of workplace learning. The development of various forms of e-learning in the workplace is contributing to strengthening the workplace as a key learning environment, while also enhancing the innovative capacity of enterprises. There is no doubt that this impact will extend and deepen.

While major international corporations have developed sophisticated e-learning systems, often blended e-learning system which combine technology with other learning strategies so as to heighten the impact and outcomes, a number of Australian good practice examples are emerging, in some cases supported under the programs of the Australian Flexible Learning Framework. Good examples are provided in cases supported under the Flexible Learning Leaders Program with the NSW Ambulance Service illustrating the potential of technology for workplace learning.

The potential of e-learning to strengthen workplace learning and build learning organisations has been examined in a study by Deloitte Research which identified

142 OECD 2001, p.18.

143 Nonaka & Takeuchi pp.69-90.

a learning organisation continuum with progression from tactical learning to integrated learning to strategic learning on the following basis:

- **tactical learning** focus on filling skill gaps in employees' current job roles or on specific projects;
- **integrated learning** focus on developing employees' skills and capabilities against a best-in-class model through formal and informal learning;
- **strategic learning** focus on integrating all components that affect human performance.[144]

This progression from tactical learning, through to strategic learning involves a progressive integration of learning strategies in the business strategies of the firm in ways that strengthen workplace leaning and which contribute to building the firm as a successful learning organisation.

Business and Lifelong Learning

The Business Council of Australia in its Action Plan for Future Prosperity released on 6 February 2005 reaffirmed that "Education, skills and innovation remains a long-standing policy priority for the BCA".[145] While business organisations such as BCA and ACCI have given commendable support for education and training reform over the past decade and more, they have seldom taken positions on the business case for lifelong learning in the context of the dynamic knowledge economy. This contrasts with the more active understanding and support that similar business organisations in Europe and North America have given to lifelong learning objectives of governments.

The continued focus of business organisations on a traditional training approach to skill development with neglect of other forms and contexts for learning, will damage Australia's competitive position in the longer term on world markets. Emerging 21st century paradigms for workplace learning and skill development, such as the American WLP approach discussed above, seldom appear in business discussions of human resource and workplace development.

At the same time, there is a contradiction between the BCA recognition of the need for "an innovative, learning culture that uses knowledge, technology and research to create wealth and employment", and the limited support for lifelong learning policies and strategies that will build the necessary learning culture in the workplace and throughout society where creativity and innovation is a natural

144 Deloitte Research 2001.

145 Business Council of Australia 2005, p.29.

outcome and expression of this culture. As the BCA long ago recognised, innovation is not essentially about science and technology but "is about people and enterprises".[146]

Business and industry are vital stakeholders and partners in the great enterprise of building Australia as an inclusive learning society where the necessary "innovative, learning culture" will exist. This is not a task that can be left to the formal education and training systems alone, but rather it will require a rich web of partnerships and alliances that recognise that business and society are interdependent, with the wellbeing of one depending on the wellbeing of the other.

This process has commenced, and some good practice examples are given in Chapter 10 over. However, such partnerships need to be extended and connected in a coherent strategy to build Australia as an inclusive learning society. In addition, business organisations will need to recognise the business case for lifelong learning and to examine how firms can be enabled to develop as creative and innovative learning organisations that enhance the workplace as a key learning environment, and which provide opportunities for staff to continue learning and growing throughout life.

A Strategic Approach to Business Philanthropy

Closely related to the notion that business and industry should be an active partner and stakeholders in building Australia as an inclusive learning society, is the development of a more strategic approach to business philanthropy where there is mutual benefit in the outcomes for business and community. An example of such an approach exists with the Microsoft/Smith Family Unlimited Potential program which is discussed in Chapter 10.

[146] Carnegie and Butlin 1993, p.ix.

Corporate Citizenship at Ford Australia

Corporate citizenship is regarded by Ford Australia as part of their business which builds relationships with key stakeholders and which fosters an ongoing dialogue with the community. Examples of initiatives taken include the Ford Employability for Life program.

This program has run over the past 5 years with Ford employees being trained in advanced communication skills to then take on the role of mentors for people who have been unemployed for longer than 12 months. The unemployed participants undertake an 8 week pre-employment training program leading to employment or further education. Success rates have been over 80%.

The Employability for Life model has also been applied to an Indigenous Employment Strategy run in 2003 and 2004 with 50 Aboriginal people. The majority of participants were either employed by Ford (25) or other organisations (14). Ford has a range of other community service programs.

While much traditional business philanthropy has been ad hoc and arms-length in supporting a range of welfare and social objectives, the conditions of 21st century society make a compelling case for a more strategic approach through partnerships where there are benefits for business as well as community. The business contribution to building a learning culture in Australian society provides a striking example where there are benefits both ways. Few things are more important than partnerships to invest in the development of human resources of the nation throughout the life cycle.

The business case for such strategic investments by business and industry has been set out by Professor Rosabeth Kanter in connection with a new paradigm for innovation focussed on "the social sector as a beta site for business innovation".[147] Examples given by Kanter illustrate an evolving approach where "companies view community needs as opportunities to develop ideas, serve new markets, and solve longstanding business problems".[148] The general case made by Kanter of why America needs corporate social innovation, progressing beyond "arms length charity", is as relevant to Australia as it is to America.

A similar case for a strategic approach to corporate philanthropy has also been made by Michael Porter and Mark Kramer in arguing for "the competitive

147 Kanter 2001, pp.153-177.

148 Ibid, p.155.

advantage of corporate philanthropy" when focused and strategic.[149] Porter and Kramer recognise, like Kanter, that in the long run social and economic goals are not inherently conflicting but integrally connected.[150] Being a good corporate citizen is fundamentally good business.

How to progress such strategic investments by business and industry is one of the key issues emerging from this study which merits extensive discussion, and long-term strategic perspectives.

Key Messages

1. The workplace is a key learning environment with an enhanced significance for business in adapting to change, generating new knowledge, and building a capacity for continuous innovation.
2. Business is a key stakeholder and beneficiary in building a learning culture in Australia, and should be an active partner.
3. Demographic change and the ageing of the workforce increases the significance of these issues for business.
4. The drivers discussed in this report will bring over time a necessary shift from training to learning.
5. Technology provides new ways to strengthen workplace learning in strategic ways.
6. These shifts will have most impact if accompanied by a more strategic approach to business philanthropy with benefits to all parties.

149 Porter and Kramer 2002.

150 Ibid, p.7.

9. INTEGRATING LEARNING AND SKILL STRATEGIES

There is a search in Australia and overseas for new ways to integrate learning and skill strategies so that learning drives the development and maintenance of skill in the workforce throughout the life cycle.

The emergence of the dynamic global knowledge economy, with its exponential pace of change, has led to considerable questioning of the traditional training approach to meeting the learning and skill needs of industry.[151] This search for a new approach more adapted to 21st century conditions, has brought to the fore the question of how best to integrate learning and skill strategies so that learning strategies can support maintaining and enhancing the skills of the workforce in a context of constant change.

While a range of connections between learning and skill strategies can be forged, a feature of the current scene has been the establishment of organisations in some systems with a mandate to align learning and skill strategies so as to maintain and enhance the skill levels of the workforce.

These organisations have replaced more narrowly focused former training authorities, and include:

- the British Learning and Skills Council;
- the Tasmanian Learning and Skills Authority;
- the Victorian Learning and Employment Skills Commission;

Victorian Learning and Employment Skills Commission

The Commission was established in 2002 in line with a recommendation of the Kirby Report on Post-compulsory education and training in order to achieve a more co-ordinated approach to provision beyond compulsory schooling. The Commission advises the Government on post-compulsory education, training, and employment, provides funding, serves as the State training agency, and supports the Local Learning and Employment Networks (LLEN). Current activities include a study of pedagogical aspects of post-compulsory provision.

(www.vlesc.vic.gov.au)

151 Kearns 2004.

Tasmanian Learning and Skills Authority

The Tasmanian Government in 2004 established the Authority in line with the policy directions set out in the 2003 report, Tasmania: A State of Learning. This report, a component in Tasmania's vision to build a learning society with lifelong learning opportunities, identifies links to be achieved between education, skills, social justice, and economic success. The four key elements in this approach include enabling second chance learning opportunities for people throughout life, and creating communities that value lifelong learning. The responsibilities of the Authority range across adult and community education, VET, higher education, and senior secondary education. Overall, Tasmania has taken a number of initiatives to promote lifelong learning in the State.

(www.ovet.tased.edu.au/tlsafacts)

UK Learning and Skills Council

The Council was established in 2000 with a mandate for the planning and funding of all post-compulsory learning below higher education. The Council is supported in its work by a network of local Learning and Skills Councils across England which have replaced the former Training and Enterprise Councils. Targets have been set to increase participation in structured learning, including participation by the 16-18 age group. Local Learning and Skill Councils develop planning to meet local needs. The Council is learner centred in its work.

(www.lsc.gov.uk)

In addition to these initiatives, other States have recognised the need to connect learning strategies with skill strategies more closely than in the past. For example, the Queensland Adult Skills and Knowledge for the Smart State policy statement includes a clear commitment to ongoing learning for adult Queenslanders in maintaining the skill and knowledge base of the State.

> *The increasing demand for skills and knowledge means that we all need to keep learning and developing throughout our lives.*[152]

This recognition aligns the need to expand learning opportunities for industries, communities and individuals with the objectives of the Queensland Smart State strategy.

> *We need smart adults who continue to learn.*[153]

The initiatives in Victoria, Tasmania, and the UK illustrate a search for more comprehensive and coherent approaches to post-compulsory learning with improved linkages between sectors. In this, they give expression to systemic principles which underpins the lifelong learning approach - that the sectors of education and training should be developed and linked in a systemic way so as to open seamless pathways for learners. This aligns with the other key principle of lifelong learning that the focus is on the learner.

While the connections between learning and skill strategies are reflected in the policies of a growing number of State systems (and other countries), they are not yet reflected at the national level where the most recent policy documents continue to be based on the training paradigm and concepts developed by ANTA, without the 21st century nexus between learning and skill to drive on-going workforce learning and adapting to change. Whether this lack of alignment between State and national policy positions will impair State and industry action to maintain and enhance industry skill levels is a question that merits serious study.

VET for the 21st Century

The initiatives discussed above have their counterpart in international discussions of the nature of VET in the dynamic 21st century context discussed in this report. The need for lifelong learning to underpin 21st century skill strategies is universally recognised as, for example, in the revised UNESCO and ILO Recommendations, and a Joint Message issued by UNESCO and ILO in 2002:

- UNESO 2001, Revised Recommendation Concerning Technical and Vocational Education;
- ILO 2003, Learning and Training for Work in the Knowledge Society;

152 Queensland Government 2004, p.2.

153 Ibid, p.4.

- UNESCO & ILO 2002, Joint Message on Technical and Vocational Education and Training for the 21st Century.

Each of these documents recognises the need for lifelong learning to underpin 21st century VET. This recognition is clearly set out in the Joint Message of 2002.

> *However, the two Organizations are aware that education and training are rapidly becoming inseparable, especially as the notion of a job for life is being replaced by the necessity for lifelong learning.*[154]
>
> *Providing all individuals with learning opportunities throughout their lives is an ambitious but necessary undertaking. An all-inclusive lifelong learning system calls for the mobilization of increased public and private resources for education and training and for providing individuals and enterprises with incentives to invest in meeting their learning and skills development needs.*[155]

Some Implications of Learning and Skill Connections

Systems are generally at an early stage of development in forging new approaches to integrate learning and skill strategies so as to encourage ongoing learning in the workplace and maintain the employability of workers. Some implications of the learning/skill nexus are set out below.

154 UNESCO and ILO 2002, p.3.

155 Ibid, p.3.

Implications of the learning/skill nexus:

1. the role of learning strategies in maintaining the skills and employability of individuals throughout working life;

2. the role of learning strategies in opening pathways to jobs for disadvantaged individuals and groups;

3. the application of learning strategies in organisational learning approaches where the whole firm is developed as a learning organisation with learning and skill strategies integrated with human resource and business strategies;

4. ways in which learning strategies can contribute to building a culture in the firm that supports innovation, enterprise, and adapting to change;

5. the role of key generic skills (including the critical learning to learn competence) in enhancing the application of skill in the workplace; maintaining employability of staff, and contributing to the quality of workplace life;

6. ways in which learning strategies can support individuals in work/life balance and transitions in the context of shifts in lifestyles including the emergence of a "portfolio lifestyle";

7. the role of learning strategies throughout life in maintaining the motivation, skill levels, and employability of older workers.

The overall thrust of achieving integration of learning and skill strategies goes in the direction of more holistic policies with better connections between work and society in a context of shifts in lifestyles and work.

This is an area requiring considerable research and innovation in the development of good practice examples. The current round of NCVER research projects on ACE/VET connections is likely to make a useful contribution although the issues in integrating learning and skill strategies are wider than the ACE/VET interface, and at present efforts in this area are hampered by the absence of a co-ordinated knowledge base on lifelong learning. This subject is discussed in Chapter 11

below with reference to the emergence of new research bodies such as the British Learning and Skill Research Centre and the Canadian Council on Learning with mandates that span learning and skill domains, and which contribute to building a knowledge base across these domains

Key Messages

1. There is a search in a number of countries for a 21st century approach to meeting the learning and skill needs of industry in a context of constant change.

2. How best to integrate learning and skill strategies is a key aspect of this search.

3. Structural changes made in the UK, Victoria, and Tasmania illustrate attempts to achieve a better interface between learning and skill strategies and to progress to more comprehensive and coherent policies for post-compulsory education and training.

4. These efforts need to be supported by a co-ordinated knowledge base on lifelong learning.

10. PARTNERSHIPS AND NETWORKS TO BUILD A LEARNING SOCIETY

How partnerships and networks can drive the process to build Australia as an inclusive learning society.

A learning society may be seen as a society comprising a rich web of overlapping and interacting learning partnerships and networks. It follows that building and linking partnerships and networks to extend learning opportunities for all is central to achieving this objective.

The pervasive nature of learning in contemporary society, in a range of forms and contexts, means that partnership action is necessary to build synergies and achieve value added outcomes for stakeholders.

While partnership building has always been important in extending learning throughout life, the impact of technology is leading to new forms of communication and learning, and new opportunities to build an inclusive learning society. This impact will deepen over time as the emerging network society develops further as a learning society with lifelong learning a central feature.

> *The network model of communication, and with it the new nature of spatial relations is rapidly changing the locus of learning, leisure and cultural activities.*[156]

Research undertaken for this project, and my consultations across Australia in all States, pointed to a diverse range of frameworks for partnership and network building. Some examples included the following:

- social partnerships such as the Microsoft/Smith Family Unlimited Potential program;
- Community Learning Partnerships as in Britain and Victoria;
- Lifelong Learning Networks in UK;
- Community Learning Networks in Canada;
- many examples of the use of ICT in building social capital in communities;
- Learning Regions in Germany;
- various forms of learning communities (eg, Learning Towns in Victoria, Learning Cities in Britain);

156 Sprint 1998, p.330.

- Smart Communities in Canada;
- Creative Communities in Western Australia and elsewhere.

While these strategies have much in common, especially in approaches to partnership building, they differ in the extent to which ICT is used to build new forms of communication, learning, and community. Where ICT is central, as in Canadian Smart Communities, development tends towards a network pattern. Where this is not the case, partnership building is usually focused on local communities as in Learning Towns, Learning Cities, and British and Victorian Learning Partnerships. However, there is also evidence of some hybrid forms evolving.

A key aspect of current trends is the growing significance of civil society in local initiatives. In part, this reflects the value of ICT for the non-profit sector. It is likely that this trend will lead to new relationships and roles for civil society, government, and the market in sustaining and transforming communities, and in supporting local economic development.

The rich diversity of partnership and network models is illustrated by the following examples.

Social Partnerships

Social partnerships can bring together business, community organisations, education institutions and other stakeholders to promote agreed social objectives.

A good example is provided by the Microsoft/Smith Family Unlimited Potential program.

Unlimited Potential

Microsoft's Unlimited Potential (UP) is a global program which operates in a number of countries focused on improving lifelong learning for children, young people and adults by providing technology skills through community-based technology centres (CTLCs). In this program, Microsoft partners with community organisations to create social and economic opportunities that can change peoples' lives and transform communities.[157]

In Australia, UP is being developed with five community partners, including the Smith Family[158] which serve as the "UP Foundation Partners". RMIT is also involved because of its long-standing links with the Smith Family. The Smith Family as the lead agency will draw on its community networks and presence in 60 communities across Australia. UP provides support to the Community Partners to provide training to address the digital divide through access, basic training, and community considerations.

British Community Learning Partnerships

A network of 104 Learning Partnerships was established in the UK in 1999 with government funding to promote a new culture of provider collaboration across all education sectors, and to rationalise the plethora of existing local partnership arrangements.

The core roles for the partnerships are:

- promoting provider collaboration in support of lifelong learning; and
- maximising the contribution of learning to local regeneration.

Administrative responsibility for this program passed on 2003 from DfES to the Learning and Skills Council. Information is available from the UK lifelong learning website (www.lifelonglearning.co.uk/llp/front.htm).

The new Victorian program of Community Learning Partnerships which commenced in 2005 has much in common with the British community learning partnership initiatives.

157 Microsoft & Smith Family 2004.

158 The other community partners are Workventures, Inspire, Australian Senior Computer Clubs Association, and Yamlur Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Corporation.

Canadian Community Learning Networks

The Office of Learning Technologies of the Canadian Department of Human Resources and Skills Development has been supporting a program of Community Learning Networks which harness the power of ICT for community building. During 2004 a Policy Conversation on Future Directives for Community Learning Networks was held with a report on the outcomes of this dialogue prepared at the end of 2004 which captured the main outcomes.[159]

Points of interest included:

- there was a recognition of the interrelation of outcomes across areas such as citizenship, health, economic development, and environment;
- a common framework of community learning was recognised;
- mentoring was widely recognised as significant;
- Community Learning Networks was seen as a core imperative requiring longer-term funding;
- a set of key enablers were identified.[160]

ICT Enabled Networks

A number of examples were given in Chapter 7 above of ICT enabled networks of various kinds. A DCITA discussion paper distinguishes geography based communities, communities of practice, communities of circumstance, and communities of interest.[161] The DCITA case studies cited in Chapter 7 provide examples of each of these technology-enabled communities.[162] Projects funded by the Australian Department of Family and Community Services under the Family and Community Networks Initiative provide further examples of the role of ICT in building networks to support families and communities.[163]

The Network for Education, Ageing and Technology illustrates the value of online networks in supporting learning.[164]

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159 For Report on the Policy Conversation see www.hrsdc.gc.ca/en/hip/lld/olt/skills_development/OLT_Research/conversation.

160 Ibid, pp.2-4.

161 DCITA 2005a, pp.33-51.

162 DCITA 2005a.

163 DCITA 2005a, pp.38-39.

164 Ibid, pp.42-43.

Network for Education, Ageing and Technology

The Network is an email listserv that aims to bring together people with an interest in the implications and use of technology by, and for the benefit of, older people. Members come from across Australia and include researchers, academics, community members, and service providers across sectors such as health and education. The diversity of membership is a strength of the network. NEAT operates out of the Institute for Rural Futures at the University of New England.

http://www.ruralfutures.une.edu.au

It is to be expected that online networks such as NEAT, and the examples given in Chapter 7, will increase and contribute to building Australia as a learning society.

Learning Regions

The application of learning strategies for regional development is becoming more prevalent in Europe and elsewhere, facilitated by programs such as the European Union's R3L initiative which is discussed below.

OECD is an major study of learning cities and regions focussed on data from five case studies in Germany, France, Spain, Denmark/Sweden, and England.[165] The 2001 report of this study concluded that learning regions should be seen as regional innovation systems with organisational learning and building social capital particularly important.[166]

The German Learning Region Program illustrates an ambitious initiative to build and extend regional networks to extend lifelong learning.[167] Some 79 projects are being funded with some 230 individual projects, and with a budget of approximately EUR 118 million from the German federal budget and the European Social Fund.[168] The program will continue until 2006 and will make a significant contribution to building an infrastructure for lifelong learning across Germany.

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165 OECD 2001a.

166 Ibid, pp.113-121.

167 Federal Ministry of Education and Research 2003, pp.17-19.

168 Ibid, p.17.

As noted above, many of the German projects are linked to similar learning region initiatives in other EU countries through networks developed under the R3L program.

Building Learning Ecosystems

The exemplars given above may be seen as building interactive learning ecosystems in communities and across Australian society. This process may also be seen as contributing to building a learning culture in Australian society with the values and habits that encourage and support learning throughout life in many contexts.

While the ecosystem concept has been aptly applied to business ecosystems and skill ecosystems in this age of networks,[169] this metaphor applies equally to the web of learning relationships fostered in community learning partnerships, and in communities generally.

Such relationships link the home, school, workplace, libraries and community centres, clubs and societies and the many other contexts in which learning occurs. The role of technology is extending the ways in which learning ecosystems can be forged along the lines discussed in Chapter 7.

Building an ecology and culture of learning in Australian society, in communities and across Australian society, is a process in which all stakeholders should be seen as partners in finding creative ways to advance learning ecosystems.

Making the Process Creative and Value Added

In Chapter 6 I cited the concept of the "Medici effect", developed by Johansson, that breakthrough insights occur at the intersection of ideas, concepts, and cultures[170] in my argument to promote the convergence of technology, community, and learning strategies.

This points to the need in building Australia as a creative learning society to multiply the points of intersection so that new ideas develop from these points of confluence. Such a process of interaction gives effect to the ideas first formulated by the evolutionary biologist Richard Dawkins in 1976 that ideas evolve and propagate just like genes.[171] In a knowledge society and economy this is a critical process that can benefit many stakeholders.

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169 Moore 1996.

170 Johansson 2004.

171 Dawkins 1976.

The development of the concept of a learning community to this point illustrates this process. The notion of a learning community has evolved through the intersection of ideas about community building and learning. As I suggested in Chapter 7, this concept can be enriched further with the addition of ideas about technology and the social appropriation of technology.

Extending this process further might involve, for example, the active involvement of business and industry at "points of intersection" with learning community development in forging new ideas about work and lifestyle for older Australians in the context of demographic change and the ageing of the workforce. Such a process could also extend to fostering new ideas about youth in work and society, and how skill can best be developed in a portfolio lifestyle.[172]

A learning society is a creative society, and it is important that the process of building an Australian learning society applies strategies that multiply points of intersection so that new ideas to drive this process are generated at these points of confluence. This will lead to value added outcomes for all stakeholders, including business and government.

Building International Networks and Links

In the context of the global knowledge society, it is important that international networks and links should be actively fostered as a source of new ideas and experience. This requirement is as important for communities and Australian society overall, as it is for business, and should be a necessary component in building an Australian learning society.

Although building international networks and links has not usually been an aspect of Australian learning community initiatives to date, various models exist in the programs of the European Union, and bodies such as UNESCO, which illustrate the potential of building international networks for the exchange of ideas and experience.

The EU R3L program and PALLACE may be taken as examples of international networks to exchange ideas and experience.

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[172] The EU Learning Region R3L program provides an example where diversity and cultural differences are explicitly exploited.

The European Union R3L Initiative

The EU R3L program serves to build networks for the exchange of ideas and experience between learning region projects across Europe. The development of these networks is seen as a way of placing European co-operation in lifelong learning on a more durable and sustainable footing.

Learning region projects are linked in a number of ways including projects focused on particular themes. Fourteen themes exist for these interchanges. These include strategies for developing regional networks for lifelong learning, lifelong learning and active citizenship, learning in senior age, promoting the multicultural region, and ICT and modern media in the learning region. An R3L Support Unit facilitates and supports the networks and projects.

http://www.r3l.euproject.net

PALLACE

The European Commission's PALLACE project (Promoting Active Lifelong Learning in Australia, Canada, China and Europe) provides an innovative example of an initiative which links communities in different countries as a contribution to learning across national frontiers and cultures. Eight cities across four continents participated in the project with several thematic connections linking the participating cities as in the R3L program. (eg Schools Co-operation Project, Adult Education Project, Cultural Services Project). The project was co-ordinated and evaluated by Napier University in Edinburgh.

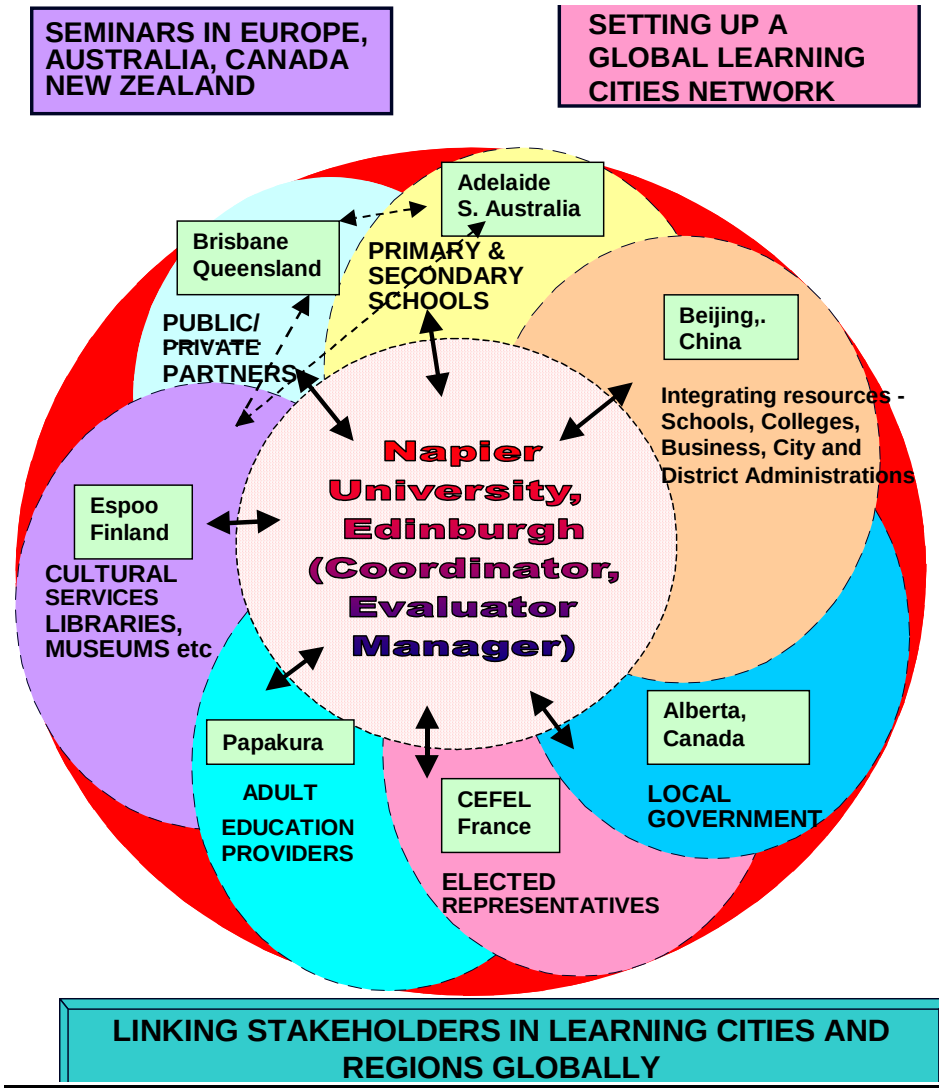
http://www.pallace.net

PALLACE was an ambitious, pioneering project which points the way to possible arrangements to extend learning community initiatives into global networks that build cultural understanding, and which facilitate the flow of new ideas. Similar international networks and links could contribute much to making the process of building a learning society creative and relevant to Australia's global context. The PALLACE model is illustrated in the figure over.

Figure 7: **CityRings**

– A Strategy for Enhancing Lifelong Learning in Cities and Regions through International Links between Stakeholders

The PALLACE Project – An Example



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Frameworks and Instruments to Build Learning Partnerships and Networks

The analysis of this report points to a number of frameworks and instruments that encourage the building and learning partnerships and networks.

These include:

- **National, State and International Government Frameworks**
- **Government Programs such as Networking the Nation and Victorian Learning Towns**
- **Programs initiated by professional organisations and other non-governmental organisations**
- **Brokerage initiatives taken by non-government organisations and others**

Comment follows on these approaches.

National, State and International Government Frameworks

- Initiatives taken by the European Union such as the European Area of Lifelong Learning provide a policy and conceptual framework to build a diverse range of partnerships and networks across EU countries, such as the networks of learning regions under the R3L program.
- The Canadian Action Plan to build Canada as a learning society emerging from the 2002 Innovation and Learning Summit provides a national example.
- Tasmanian policy to build Tasmania as a State of Learning provides a State example.

Tasmania: a State of Learning

Tasmania has developed comprehensive strategies to progress lifelong learning for all aligned with overall planning for the development of the State. The centrepiece of this integrated approach to the development of the State is the *Tasmania Together* plan which was developed through a community-oriented process. The need for lifelong learning is explicitly recognised in the goals of the plan.

Following *Tasmania Together*, two follow up education planning documents were released to progress lifelong learning. These were *Learning Together* released in 2000, and the subsequent *Tasmania: A State of Learning* which set out a strategy for post-Year 10 education and training in Tasmania.

In addition, a Learning and Skill Authority has been established with a mandate across all sectors of education and training to replace the former State-training authority. Tasmania will host a major conference on lifelong learning in July.

Government Programs

A range of government programs such as Networking the National and Victorian Learning Towns build partnerships and networks which encourage and support learning. Such programs do not usually have the comprehensive range and whole-of-government focus of the frameworks outlined above, and may not be sufficiently connected to other relevant programs. However, Victorian Learning Towns illustrate how co-ordination can be achieved at the local level in the best cases.

Non-Government Initiatives

A range of initiatives taken by professional organisations and other non-governmental organisations illustrate how common interest networks may be built up across Australia using ICT. The DCITA case studies cited in Chapter 7 provide examples of networks across Australia that link people with common interests in fields such as chess, and conservation.

Some examples are:

- Anglicare Online provides for communication between member agencies;
- Australian Seniors Computer Clubs Association provides opportunities for seniors to enjoy the benefits of ICT in adding to life;
- depressionNet uses ICT to support people with depression;
- Inspire Foundation's Reach Out and Beanbag enable young people to go online to get help;
- Queensland Rural Women's Network uses ICT to maintain social connections between women across rural areas of Queensland;
- University of the Third Age Online extends the U3A concept to online communities of seniors;
- Australian Chess Foundation uses ICT to link members;
- Capricornia Online provides online communities in a Queensland community;
- dEadly mob encourages online communities of Indigenous youth.

These examples illustrate the range of non-profit organisation initiatives which will certainly increase as digital literacy and capability extends through the community.

Brokerage Initiatives

The growing interest in widening access to learning opportunities through building partnerships and networks has led to an emerging focus on the learning broker role, and how this is best undertaken.

Initiatives in Australia include action taken by non-profit organisations such as InfoXchange to broker partnerships, while a current learning broker project sponsored by Adult Learning Australia in Gunnedah illustrates a related approach.

While the Australian learning brokerage knowledge base is at an early stage of development, a recent research study from the UK on learning brokerage provides valuable insights into this key function in a learning society.

InfoXchange and the Atherton Gardens Project

Atherton Gardens is a high rise public housing estate in inner Melbourne with high ethnic diversity with most of the residents immigrants from Vietnam, China, and other countries.

InfoXchange, a Melbourne-based non-profit community technology organisation initiated the project which provides infrastructure, training and support so all residents can be linked to a computer network so as to improve the circumstances and capacity of the community.

InfoXchange brokered an alliance of support from a number of State government, local government, and community agencies, with Swinburne University brought in to evaluate the initiative. This was an ambitious initiative in combating disadvantage with the InfoXchange role central.

Learning Brokerage

A report prepared by the Institute for Access Studies at Staffordshire University for the UK Learning and Skills Research Centre provides useful insights into the key learning brokerage role which builds bridges between potential learners and providers to reach those people excluded from learning.[173]

[173] Thomas L et al 2004.

The report identifies three levels of brokerage:

- very informal taking the form of suggestion and advice;
- more formal in terms of providing advice;
- strategic at the level of working to change institutional structures.[174]

The report concludes that brokerage is context specific so that a range of strategies, with varying degrees of formatting is required.

Six stages are identified in developing a brokerage process framework. These are:

- understanding the current situation;
- gaining entry and building trust;
- making learning meaningful;
- identifying the right learning opportunity;
- promoting learning success;
- addressing organisational issues.[175]

The insights gained from the British study of the learning brokerage role need to be tested in the Australian context. The ALA Gunnedah project, and other learning community initiatives, provide an opportunity for this to happen. The six stages in the learning brokerage framework have much in common with steps that typically occur in the conduct of learning audits in community learning initiatives.

174 Ibid, p.19.

175 Ibid, p.6.

Key Messages

1. A learning society may be seen as a society comprising a rich web of overlapping and interacting networks and partnerships.

2. A diverse range of community and virtual learning partnerships have emerged in Australia and overseas.

3. ICT is a key driver of new kinds of networks.

4. Community and virtual learning partnerships may be seen as building learning ecosystems which link and build interactions between a range of partners.

5. This process can be made creative through breakthrough insights that occur at points of intersection of ideas, concepts and cultures

    - Multiplying points of intersection is important in building a creative learning society

6. Links to international networks can bring new ideas and experience.

7. The learning brokerage role is increasingly important in building learning networks and partnerships, especially for disadvantaged groups.

11. BUILDING THE KNOWLEDGE BASE

Why strengthening research and building the knowledge base on lifelong learning is a necessary step in building Australia as an inclusive learning society

The progress of lifelong learning in Australia is hampered by the absence of a developed and co-ordinated knowledge base. Lifelong learning has not been a research priority in Australia, and existing knowledge is fragmented across a range of Commonwealth and State sites without a dedicated national reference point existing. The situation reflects the overall lack of priority given to lifelong learning in most systems up to now.

At the national level, while a comprehensive dedicated website on lifelong learning does not exist, the Adult Learning Australia Learning Community Catalyst (www.lcc.edu.au) performs a valuable function in the area of learning community initiatives, while the RMIT Observatory Pascal on Place Management, Social Capital and Learning (www.obs-pascal.com) adds value with its international links. Other information relevant to lifelong learning is scattered across the websites of Departments such as DCITA, DOTARS, FACS, ABS, and DEST.

Much the same situation exists in most States, although sources on adult and community education are well signposted in some States. However, the lack of research priority and the fragmentation of information sources reflects an obsolete view of sectoral based education and training, and is not aligned with a contemporary 21st century concept of learning throughout life in many contexts in building a learning society.

The Situation Overseas

The United Kingdom and Canada may be taken as examples where a more developed and co-ordinated knowledge base is being built up that straddles sectoral boundaries.

In the UK, the Department for Education and Skills had a dedicated website for lifelong learning (www.lifelonglearning.co.uk) which keeps stakeholders informed on current developments.

In addition, a Learning and Skill Research Centre has been established serviced by the Learning and Skills Development Agency (www.lsrc.ac.uk). This Centre has an exclusive focus on all post-compulsory learning, whether formal or informal in

institutions, in community-based learning, or at work. The Centre has a focus on impact, with a remit to increase the impact of research on policy and practice in the areas of learning and skill.

The remit of the Centre also includes a requirement to engage in "blue skies" studies in order to assess likely future trends and their implications for reform to meet a changing world.

The Canadian Approach

Canada provides an example of a country that has taken concerted action to strengthen research and build the knowledge base on learning in many contexts. This action was given a stimulus by the 2002 National Summit on Innovation and Learning with the five point Action Plan emerging from the Summit including a commitment to building Canada as a learning society.

Canadian action in building the knowledge base for lifelong learning has included:

- the funding of a research network on new approaches to lifelong learning by the Social Science and Human Research Council (SSHRS) over the period 1997 to 2002;
- follow up funding by SSHRC of a Research Network on the Changing Nature of Work and Lifelong Learning during the period 2002-2004;
- the establishment of the Canadian Council on Learning to provide a focal point for building the knowledge base on lifelong learning in Canadian society.

The research network on New Approaches to Lifelong Learning (NALL) during its funding over 1997 to 2002 provided substantial data on both formal and informal learning, including undertaking the first national survey on informal learning in 1998.[176] Other surveys included teachers' learning habits.

The work undertaken by NALL has now led to the subsequent Phase 2 research network on The Changing Nature of Work and Lifelong Learning.[177]

Canada Council on Learning

The Canadian Council on Learning (CCL) was an outcome of the 2002 National Summit on Innovation and Learning and was established in 2004 as a national, independent and non-profit corporation committed to improving learning across Canada and across all walks of life.

[176] www.oise.utoronto.ca/depts/scse/csuu/nall

- By informing Canadians on the progress of learning in Canada, the Council will help empower them to learn better.
- By promoting a Canada-wide learning culture with all partners, the Council will help drive real progress in lifelong learning.
- By promoting and facilitating the exchange of knowledge and information among those involved in delivery of learning across the country, the Council will help remove silos and ensure that success stories are not only shared but repeated across Canada.[178]

These objectives mean that the Council will not only act to build the knowledge base on lifelong learning, but will also develop indicators and monitor Canada's progress towards achieving a learning society. This will include the role of a Composite Learning Index. This is an ambitious task worthy of being closely monitored by Australian stakeholders with similar objectives and interests.

The Council will catalogue the knowledge base on lifelong learning and share it with all interested parties.[179] This is seen as a "knowledge railway" linking Canadians to knowledge through "a vibrant, east-west learning architecture" across the whole country.

The role of the Council is seen as a key component in Canada's National Innovation Strategy in building a competitive knowledge-based economy, and as a strategic investment in Canada's future.

The work of the Council will be progressed through a number of CCL Knowledge Centres which will serve as the conduit by which learning information is obtained and shared across Canada.

The Knowledge Centres will be located across the regions of Canada with themes which reflect the learning domains which require the most urgent attention. These will include:

- Work and Learning
- Early Childhood Learning
- Adult Learning
- Aboriginal Learning
- Health and Learning

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177 www1.oise.utoronto.ca/research/wall

178 Canadian Council on Learning 2005 (www.ccl-cca.ca/).

179 Ibid, p.1.

- Formal Learning[180]

While the Canadian Council on Learning is at an early stage of development, it provides an innovative model for a national approach to building and disseminating the knowledge base for lifelong learning, and monitoring progress towards this objective. It will be worth monitoring the progress of the Council in the context of addressing the question of how an Australian co-ordinated knowledge base to underpin the development of lifelong learning can best be achieved.

Research Priorities

Strengthening research on lifelong learning will require a careful assessment of research priorities, and a process to progress this objective. While it was not feasible to undertake this task in the course of this project, a few priorities such as learning by older workers (and work and learning generally), Indigenous learning, and learning in communities in many contexts stand out at this stage. The initial Canadian priorities for Knowledge Centres would all seem to have their counterparts in Australian needs.

In working towards a co-ordinated national approach to building the knowledge base for lifelong learning, there would be value in a first step involving consideration by research agencies such as ACER and NCVER, along with relevant government agencies such as DEST and ABS, on ways to progress this necessary underpinning for building an inclusive learning society.

Including the Wider Benefits of Learning

Because of the pervasive nature of learning in contemporary Australian society, and the growing significance of the wider benefits of learning, it will be important that any knowledge management system for learning includes links to key areas where the wider benefits of learning add value. These include areas such as health, families, communities, Indigenous affairs, and regional development, as well as work and learning.

The Canadian Council on Learning Knowledge Centres recognise this requirement with the inclusion of Knowledge Centres for Health and Learning and Work and Learning in the Council's knowledge system. This requirement points to some form of network arrangement such as the Canadian Council is implementing.

[180] Ibid, p.3. The Formal Learning Knowledge Centre will be established through the Canadian Education Statistics Council.

Some Options for Consideration

In building the knowledge base for progressing lifelong learning in Australia and building a learning culture and society, a range of options could be considered.

These include:

- a dedicated website on lifelong learning, maintained by an appropriate agency or organisation with links to a range of relevant government and non-government sites including the ALA Learning Community Catalyst and the Pascal Observatory;
- a dedicated web site with links maintained by a consortium of research agencies and centres, such as NCVER and ACER;
- the establishment of an Australian Council on Learning along the lines of the Canadian Council on Learning with a mandate to develop and co-ordinate the knowledge base, and possibly to monitor progress.

Variants are possible for each of these options. For example, in place of a possible Australian Council on Learning a joint government/business Australia Learning Foundation might be considered.

The Canadian Council on Learning, as discussed above, provides a useful model. Learning is the fundamental 21st century competence, and an organisation with a mandate to co-ordinate and develop the knowledge base on learning - and ensure its effective dissemination to all stakeholders - would perform a function with a significant value across a range of social, economic, and cultural sectors.

Such an organisation might function as the hub of a network of components, as the Canadian Council will do with its constituent Knowledge Centres located across Canada.

Building a co-ordinated knowledge base for learning throughout life in many contexts should be seen as an initial priority requiring early action to examine options such as those listed above.

Key Messages

1. The progress of lifelong learning in Australia is hampered by the absence of a co-ordinated knowledge base.

2. Lifelong learning has not been a research priority and existing knowledge is scattered across a range of research bodies and sites.

3. This contrasts with the co-ordinated arrangements existing in countries such as Canada and Britain where a national focal point exists.

4. Options are suggested that could build the necessary knowledge base.

12. IMPLICATIONS FOR ADULT AND COMMUNITY EDUCATION

How future directions for lifelong learning in Australia will lead to shifts in the role of ACE with a mainstreaming and increased significance for adult learning in many contexts in a more systemic approach to learning.

> *These developments have stimulated a shift from the concept of adult education to that of adult learning in a more systemic adult-centred view.*
>
> OECD 2003, p.74

> *The majority of citizens think they learn best in informal settings.*
>
> Cedefop 2003, p.13.

The future directions for lifelong learning in Australia will have major implications for the role of ACE and will lead to a mainstreaming of adult learning with enhanced significance for this key dimension of a learning society. This shift will pose a major challenge for ACE and will require a period of substantial creativity and innovation in working through the implications of this broadened role.

The work of OECD and other international agencies on lifelong learning has demonstrated how progressing lifelong learning policies and strategies has led to shifts in the role of adult and community education towards a broadened concept of adult learning occurring in many contexts, and taking many forms. The theme lies at the core of the 2003 OECD report on *Beyond Rhetoric: Adult Learning Policies and Practices.*

The same conclusion had previously been reached at a joint OECD/Unites States Department of Education Conference held in 1998 on *How Adults Learn*.[181] This conference concluded that a new paradigm for adult learning was emerging resulting in the effect that "Adult education, as we have known it, is ceasing to exist"[182].

The core characteristics of the lifelong learning approach, involving the centrality of the learner and systemic perspectives which connect various learning contexts,

[181] OECD & US Department of Education 1998.

[182] Ibid, p.3.

mean that ACE will need to be mainstreamed with better connections to the other education sectors and to other areas of social, cultural, and economic policy and development if the wider benefits of learning discussed in this report are to be achieved.

This mainstreaming of the ACE role in more integrated and holistic approaches to learning in many contexts, will bring substantial benefits to learners, as well as to ACE providers and other stakeholders, such as communities and business. Developing innovative strategies to progress these objectives will require a greatly strengthened research and development effort, and more co-ordinated exchanges of ideas and experience.

The Key Implications

The key implications of future directions for lifelong learning in Australia for ACE may be summarised as follows:

1. It will lead to a mainstreaming of adult learning with better connections to the other education sectors and to other areas of social, cultural and economic activity.

2. Adult learning will be a key aspect of more integrated and holistic strategies in which past distinctions (eg vocational and general education) will be irrelevant and counter-productive.

3. There will be a shift over time from the ACE concept to that of adult learning in many contexts.

4. The learner-centred philosophy of lifelong learning will enhance the ACE role.

5. Substantial research and pedagogical innovation will be required with ACE at the frontier in developing pedagogies relevant to contexts such as the workplace, home, and community organisations.

6. The growing centrality of the ICT role in transforming the way we learn will require ACE to be innovative in developing its role in building virtual and place learning communities.

7. The significance of sustaining and transforming Australia as an inclusive learning society will add weight to the ACE role in community learning partnerships.

8. The learning brokerage role of ACE will become increasingly significant in the learner-centred approach of lifelong learning in building bridges between learners and providers.

9. Overall, progressing towards the vision of Australian as an inclusive learning society with learning opportunities throughout life available for all, will enhance the significance of the ACE role in partnership with the other education sectors, and with a wide range of other stakeholders.

10. In exercising a leadership role in this process of building a learning society, ACE will need to be flexible, develop new areas of expertise and partners; and build up a co-ordinated knowledge and research base. ALA should have a key role in these developments.

These implications will require extensive discussion and considerable innovation. ALA and its networks can play a key role in following through on these implications in partnership with many other stakeholders. The key role of civic entrepreneurs in initiating community learning partnerships and networks will become increasingly central in the spectrum of ACE functions.

Other Implications for ACE

In addition to the key implications for ACE set out above, a number of other implications for the work of ACE flow out of the analysis of this report.

These include:

- the enhanced significance and value of informal learning;
- finding ways to integrate learning and skill strategies;
- strengthening and co-ordinating research on lifelong learning;
- developing an adult learning continuum that integrates personal development, community development, and economic development in seamless and connected pathways.

These implications are discussed below.

Increased Significance of Informal Learning

There is comment in Chapter 8 above on the increased significance of informal learning in the context of a knowledge-driven society and imperatives for lifelong learning in many contexts. Studies undertaken in Canada and the UK cited in Chapter 8 confirm this growing significance. The value of informal learning in many contexts such as community centres, Neighbourhood Houses, libraries, clubs

and societies points to ways in which the ACE role can contribute to building a learning society in partnership with a range of partners.

The ACE sector will have a key role in strengthening informal learning. As Larsson observes, adult education needs to be understood as something that can change the results and the character of everyday learning.[183]

Integrating learning and Skill Strategies

The analysis of Chapter 9 points to a further area for strengthening the ACE role in the development of innovative approaches to integrating learning and skill strategies.

Strengthening Research on Lifelong Learning

Chapter 10 comments on the absence of a co-ordinated knowledge base on lifelong learning with know-how and research findings scattered across a range of government agencies and research centres (including NCVER and ACER) at both national and State levels. Research on lifelong learning has not been a priority, and the knowledge base is insufficiently developed.

The ACE sector is well placed to contribute to building the knowledge base in the areas where ACE has a distinctive contribution to make. These include access strategies, community learning strategies and partnerships in a range of contexts, and effective pedagogies for various life stages and groups (including older people). The ALA Learning Community Catalyst provides a convenient focal point for information on learning communities and related strategies. There will be much to be gained through strengthening the ACE contribution to research in the use of strategies such as situated learning and action learning and research, the learning brokerage role, and research on how adults learn in various contexts, including current findings from brain research.

Developing an Adult Learning Continuum

Contemporary conditions have led to a blurring of the distinction between ACE and VET so that it is no longer useful to maintain this distinction. Rather, the contemporary approach, advocated by OECD in its 2003 report on adult learning, is to recognise a shift from the concept of adult education "towards that of adult learning in a more systemic adult-centred view."[184]

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183 Larsson 1997, pp.250-259 (In Walters (ed)).

184 OECD 2003, p.74.

This concept accords with a lifelong learning approach with its key features of a learner-centred approach and systemic perspective. Rigid boundaries between the sectors serve as barriers to open learning pathways for all Australians in a context where sectoral and funding policies should not determine outcomes for Australians. The focus should now be, as OECD advocates, on learners rather than sectors and providers.

This holistic vision of adult learning advocated by OECD and others points to an adult learning continuum serving a spectrum of interdependent needs for personal development, community development, and economic development. Such an adult learning continuum is illustrated by Figure 4.

Personal development	Community development	Economic development
- Mainly informal learning - Motivation for learning - Building identity capital - Access & equity objectives	- Largely informal learning - Community learning partnerships - Building social capital - Sustaining families - Active citizenship & democracy	- Formal & informal learning - Individual & organisational learning - Building skill & human capital - Technology-enabled learning

Both ACE and VET would contribute in an adult learning continuum along these lines, often in partnership with other stakeholders such as local government councils, industry, other community organisations, and State and Commonwealth governments. Community learning partnerships can be an effective way of progressing this spectrum of socio-economic and cultural objectives.

An adult learning continuum along these lines would bring benefits to all stakeholders.

- Interdependencies and synergies could be achieved between personal, community, and economic development.
- These relationships would build identity, social and human capital while recognising the social underpinning of economic outcomes.
- It would contribute to building holistic strategies that contribute to progressing objectives for a skilled and adaptive workforce, personal fulfilled and quality of life, and a well-functioning society.
- It will contribute to building a learning culture in Australia.

The need to bring these objectives into holistic strategies has been recognised in the work of agencies such as OECD as, for example, in the OECD DeSeCo

program on key competencies where the identified competencies are directed to "a successful life and a well-functioning society".[185]

As the role of ACE evolves in the context of the emerging Australian learning society, it will be necessary to redefine the concept of adult and community education in an integrated adult learning continuum which progresses personal, community, and economic objectives. A useful start in this process exists in the concept of ACE adopted by the Tasmanian government in the context of its policy to develop Tasmania as a "State of Learning".

> *The Tasmanian Government is committed to creating a culture that encourages people to continue learning throughout their lives. Adult and community education (ACE) has a vital role in providing people of all ages with learning opportunities that are diverse, flexible, accessible, inclusive, learner-focused and responsive. ACE enables people to engage in learning that develops their personal, social and economic potential, and encourage people to develop the confidence, skills and desire to continue to learn throughout their lives.*

This statement is of interest in conveying the holistic approach to adult learning advocated in their report which builds identity, social, and human capital in communities, and a culture that values and progresses learning in many contexts.

I recognise that progressing from the current sectoral divisions to a holistic concept of adult learning in many contexts will require addressing a range of barriers, including attitudinal barriers and funding policies. It will require necessary changes in both ACE and VET, and a degree of vision and leadership. However, while the current sectoral boxes remain, ACE will continue to have the poorly funded Cinderella status outlined in the 1997 Senate Committee report on adult education, and the full potential of adult learning in contributing to building Australia as an inclusive and successful learning society, able to navigate the turbulence and conditions of the global knowledge society and economy, will not be achieved.

It is likely that current NCVER research projects on ACE/VET connections will make a useful contribution to mapping future directions towards a more integrated adult learning continuum, but there is a strong case for early discussion of ways of progressing towards a more holistic and integrated approach to adult learning in many contexts as a key underpinning of Australia as an inclusive learning society.

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[185] Rychen & Salganik 2003.

OECD in its 2003 Education Policy Analysis called adult learning "the weak link in the lifelong learning framework"[186] Lifelong learning in Australia will languish unless action is taken to address this weak link, including mainstreaming the role of adult and community education in an adult learning continuum that supports learning throughout life in many contexts. How to achieve this necessary response merits early consideration.

Key Messages

1. Progressing lifelong learning and building Australia as an inclusive learning society will require mainstreaming the role of adult and community education in holistic strategies.

2. This is likely to be accompanied by a shift from the current concept of adult education to that of adult learning in a more systemic learner-centred perspective.

3. Building a learning society will require better recognition of the key role of informal learning in many contexts.

4. An integrated and holistic approach will best be progressed through replacing the current sectoral divisions by an adult learning continuum which incorporates personal, community, and economic development in ways that recognises interdependencies, and which build synergies through holistic strategies.

5. These important questions merit early discussion.

[186] OECD 2003, p.81.

13. TOWARDS AUSTRALIA AS AN INCLUSIVE LEARNING SOCIETY

Why concerted national action involving partnership and collaboration of many stakeholders is imperative.

Creating a lifelong learning framework based on these principles requires complex changes in a country's entire learning system.

World Bank 2003.

By definition, lifelong learning is a major challenge because its logic goes beyond that of organised learning in the public - and publicly funded - domain.

Cedefop, 2004.

Australia has a choice; to tinker or transform.

The Age, 9 March 2005

Creating one world of lifelong learning - an integrated approach for an inclusive society.

Cedefop, 2003.

The Challenge of Lifelong Learning for Australian Society

In April 1997 the Senate Employment, Education and Training Reference Committee in its report *Beyond Cinderella: Towards a Learning Society* recommended that the Commonwealth Government

- make an unequivocal commitment to the concept of lifelong learning and the promotion of a learning society; and
- imbue its education policies and associated funding mechanisms with the values and principles of lifelong learning for all Australians.

This has not happened, while the case for lifelong learning for all Australians, and for actively building Australia as an inclusive learning society, is even more compelling, for the reasons discussed in this report, than it was in 1997.

Creating one world of lifelong learning, and achieving an integrated and holistic approach to learning throughout life in an inclusive and successful society, is a critical challenge for Australian society – and all stakeholders.

As a former Director-General of Education in three State and Territory systems observed in comments on this project, this will be a critical test of vision and leadership.[187]

The Response from Consultations

An overview of the key themes emerging from the consultations conducted in all States is set out in Appendix 1.[188]

The central message emerging from the consultations is that lifelong learning is poorly understood in Australia, and is typically confused with access to the formal education system. The contemporary concept of lifelong learning adopted by OECD, the European Union, and most leading OECD countries, which includes formal, non-formal, and informal modes of learning is not well understood. This lack of understanding serves as a barrier to concerted action by the full range of stakeholders – including business and industry, community organisations, local government, State and Commonwealth governments – in progressing learning throughout life in many contexts in ways that benefit all stakeholders. Lifelong learning is seldom seen as a survival issue. The wider benefits of learning across Australian society are not sufficiently realised.

The outcome of this situation is fragmentation of effort, waste of resources, and the denial of learning and life opportunities for many Australians.

While the overall situation revealed by consultations is generally bleak, the consultations also revealed splendid examples of creative innovations where individuals, communities, governments, organisations, and firms had taken initiatives to extend learning opportunities. Several States have taken strategic initiatives to extend learning opportunities throughout life, in comprehensive and coherent strategies, with Tasmania providing a striking example of total commitment to lifelong learning and building a learning society. The challenge is to extend these good practice examples across Australia within a framework of common purpose, collaboration and partnership.

Overall, the impact of the drivers discussed in this report is starting to build a tide of change and opportunity which, in the words of Shakespeare, "taken at the flood leads on to fortune."[189]

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187 Spring 2005.

188 In addition to the consultations a National Conversation on Lifelong Learning was conducted through the ALA website with five key messages posted for comment through March-April 2005. The Overview of Key Themes was posted on the ALA website for comment.

189 Shakespeare, *Julius Caesar*.

A Vision of Australia as an Inclusive Learning Society

The famous UNESCO *Learning to Be* report of 1972 popularised the concept of a learning society in which learning opportunities throughout life would be widely available for all citizens.

> *Education is overreaching the frontiers which confined it in centuries-old tradition. Little by little, it is spreading, in time and space to enter its true domain – that of the entire human being in all his dimensions, which are far too vast and complex to be constrained within the limits of any "system", in the static non-evolutionary meaning of the word. In this domain, the act of teaching gives way to the act of learning.*[190]

While the UNESCO Faure Report set an idealistic vision of a learning society, developments since 1972 - such as the impact of information and communication technology, have provided ways of progressing that vision to reality in a world increasingly without boundaries, except those of conventional thinking and habits.

Although the concept of a learning society has evolved in a number of ways since the Faure Report, a 21st century learning society may be seen as having four principle characteristics:

1. A learning culture has been built up where learning is valued and where a strong motivation for learning exists throughout society.

2. Access to learning opportunities and pathways throughout life is facilitated for all citizens in many contexts.

3. The society is inclusive and democratic in affording learning opportunities for all to underpin personal fulfilment and a successful life for individuals, while also serving to support a well functioning society and economy.

4. There is a rich web of partnerships and networks to encourage and support learning in many contexts.

This concept is visionary, but it is also a necessary aspiration in the context of the 21st century conditions and imperatives discussed in this report. The five pillars discussed in this report, which are set out in Figure 8 over, provide ways of progressing towards this necessary aspiration. As argued throughout this report,

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190 UNESCO 1972, p.161.

progress will require comprehensive and holistic strategies which integrate social, educational, cultural, and economic objectives, and which build symbiotic relationships between these objectives. Or, in terms of the conceptual model adopted for this project, which simultaneously build up identity, social, and human capital to support individual well-being, sustaining communities and families, while also progressing desired economic outcomes.

The progress of Nordic countries, which is discussed in Appendix 2, may be seen as an example of countries which have set out to build a learning society and to extend lifelong learning opportunities for all, Canada provides a further example of a country with a more recent commitment to building a learning society[191], while the European Union policy for building a European Area of Lifelong Learning to support the social and economic objectives for Europe set out at the Lisbon European Council[192], illustrates this process across a group of countries.

Why Action is Imperative

The analysis of this report points to five compelling reasons why action to extent learning opportunities throughout life for all Australians is imperative.

These reasons are:

1. the impact of the contextual shifts and drivers discussed in Chapter 2
   – these include ageing of the population and workforce, requirements of a knowledge economy in a context of exponential change, and changes in work;

2. action being taken by Australia's competitors;[193]

3. the inefficiency and waste of the current situation with fragmentation of effort and a failure to mobilise all available resources in concerted collaborative action;

4. the new opportunities provided by such instruments as technology to progress learning opportunities in innovative ways;

5. the potential value of achieving the wider benefits of learning across a range of social and economic sectors
   – health, welfare, supporting families and sustaining communities, strengthening human capital.

191 This is discussed in Chapter 3 of this report.

192 This policy is also discussed in Chapter 3.

193 This is also discussed in Chapter 3.

The significance of these imperatives makes a compelling case for concerted, collaborative action to progress learning opportunities throughout life for all Australians, and to build a learning culture and values that supports Australian social and economic objectives.

The continued evolution of the global economy makes a compelling case for proactive action. The recent Australian/United States Free Trade Agreement, and initial steps being taken towards possible free trade agreements with China and Japan, points to a rapidly changing economic environment where Australians will require new knowledge and skills, and a capacity to continue learning throughout life. As OECD has rightly observed:

> *Lifelong learning is a core strategy for moving to a knowledge society, and ensuring that the benefits are equitably distributed.*

This study has pointed to the extensive learning resources which exist in communities – resources such as libraries, museums, art galleries, community technology and learning resources, and in the underutilized human resources of communities. Innovations such as the Hume Global Learning Village illustrate how these resources can be mobilised at a community level where there is vision, leadership, and partnership.

The study has demonstrated the compelling case for learning throughout life, and actively building a learning culture in society, on economic, social and capital grounds.

- The **economic case** for learning throughout life involves building a workforce able to adapt to change, maintain skill and a learning capability, and be innovative and entrepreneurial in seizing opportunities. 21st century innovation policy needs a broader social and cultural base which recognises that "innovation and learning is interactive".[194]
- The **social case** involves building an inclusive society with well-being and opportunities for all, sustaining communities and supporting families, and maintaining the employability of individuals throughout working life.
- The **cultural case** involves building a culture where learning and creativity are valued and progressed, where new ideas are welcomed, and where personal fulfilment and quality of life are enhanced.

[194] Nyholm et al 2001, p.263.

The interdependence of these objectives has been emphasised throughout this report, and is reflected in the three capitals conceptual model adopted for this study involving social, identity, and human capital. It is also reflected in the adult learning continuum discussed in Chapter 12 and in the "Nordic Way" discussed in Appendix 2. The social and cultural underpinning of economic success is a key dimension in the context of the dynamic knowledge economy.

The APEC Forum

The essential need on economic grounds for a comprehensive framework that fosters a learning society was recognised in "The Best Practice Guidelines for Fostering a Lifelong Learning Society" submitted by Chinese Taipei to the Sixteenth APEC Ministerial Meeting held on 17-18 November 2004 in Santiago, reflecting work undertaken in the APEC Human Resource Development Committee on strategies for human capacity building in APEC countries.

> *In this regard, the establishment of a comprehensive framework for fostering a lifelong learning society is essential for maintaining sources of quality human capital, ensuring efficiency and equity in our market economies, and enhancing economic growth and prosperity over our APEC region.*[195]

The Significance of Culture

> *Social capital, the crucible of trust and critical to the health of an economy, rests on cultural roots.*
>
> Francis Fukuyama, *Trust*, 1995.

Studies of social capital by scholars such as Robert Putnam and Francis Fukuyama have pointed to the significance of culture, and cultural shifts, in underpinning social capital.[196] The Business Council of Australia and Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry were right in their joint study of key competencies to identify a number of personal attributes that contribute to overall employability.[197] The attributes identified generally reflect values and the underpinning culture of

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195 Chinese Taipei 2005, p.1. Lifelong learning has been discussed a number of times at APEC Ministerial and High Level meetings. At the 2nd APEC Education Ministerial Meeting the topic "Education for Learning Societies in the 21st Century" drew attention to the theme that lifelong learning would be the characteristic of his society. The APEC High Level Meeting on Human Capacity Building held in Beijing in 2000 led to a commitment to strengthen co-operation in providing a more cohesive policy environment for human capacity building for the new economy.

196 Putnam 2000, Fukuyama 1995.

197 ACCI/BCA 2002.

families and communities. While such attributes do not easily fit the current competency based training paradigm for skill development, they are nevertheless increasingly important in the current context of the global knowledge economy with its exponential pace of change and blurring of traditional boundaries.

Building a learning and enterprise culture, and supporting values, is best addressed at a local community level, so that I have emphasised the importance of community learning partnerships as a key pillar in building an inclusive learning society.

In the search for more integrated strategies for social, cultural, and economic development it is well to note the observation of OECD on policies for human capital.

> *All learning environments – including the family, the workplace, and the pre-school environment – are important.*[198]

The Missing Framework

While Australia has various national frameworks for such national objectives as building an Information Economy and fostering science and innovation,[199] the most fundamental framework of all is missing. That is a national framework to develop the human resources of Australia through learning throughout life in many contexts. Such a framework will underpin and contribute to related national frameworks that draw on human resources, such as those cited above.

The discussion paper for this project listed four alternative scenarios for future directions for lifelong learning in Australia.[200] I found in consultations that there was considerable support for the view that all four scenarios were needed, and that a national framework was needed to encourage and support local initiatives.

The loss to Australian society through the absence of a comprehensive national framework for lifelong learning was cogently put in comments from the Chief Executive Officer of The Smith Family.

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198 OECD 2001c, p.66.

199 Department of Communication, Information Technology, and the Arts 2004; Department of Industry, Tourism, and Resources, 2005.

200 These were: 1. Civil society and local government in the driving seat; 2. Government support for selected local and regional initiatives; 3. Comprehensive and integrated State and Territory initiatives; 4. Development of a national framework to build Australia as an inclusive and innovative learning society.

> *Lifelong learning lies at the heart of The Smith Family's Learning for Life suite of programs, which focus on education/lifelong learning as a preventative strategy against intergenerational disadvantage. As an evidence-based organisation, we welcome the exploration of the benefits of lifelong learning within the discussion papers, and acknowledge the current absence of a comprehensive national framework for lifelong learning in Australia that could extend these benefits across communities nationwide.*[201]

Herein lies the nub of the lifelong learning question for Australian society. How can the clear benefits of learning throughout life be extended to all citizens and communities nationwide in ways that mobilize the know-how of many community organisations, such as the Smith Family, the experience of innovative communities such as those discussed in this report, the evolving learning roles of institutions such as public libraries and the media, and the contributions of the range of stakeholders (including business and the education sectors) who will benefit from a concerted national effort. What kind of framework might best progress this necessary aspiration merits widespread discussion and action.

The Way Forward

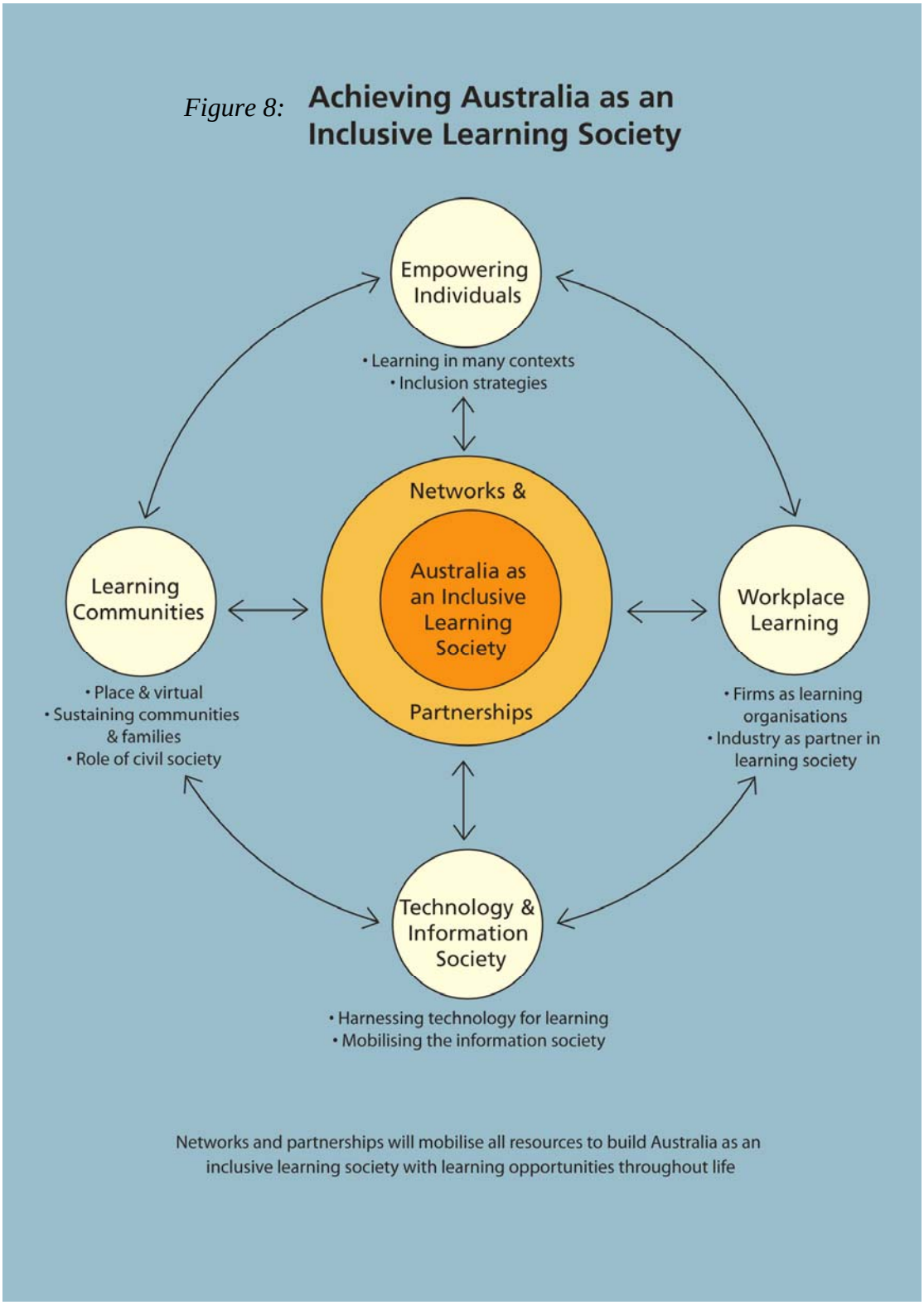
The analysis of this report has pointed to five key pathways towards building an inclusive learning society with learning opportunities throughout life for all citizens. These pathways or pillars were discussed in Chapter 4 and are illustrated in Figure 8 over.

While initiatives are occurring across Australia in each of these areas, they are fragmented and need to be brought together in more coherent, integrated, and comprehensive strategies. A national vision and framework could provide the missing glue, and could foster more creative interaction between initiatives. In making this development process more creative, it is well to observe the so called "Medici effect": the breakthrough insights typically occur at the intersection of ideas, concepts and cultures.[202] Creating more points of intersection should be a key aspect of this development process towards a learning society.

201 Henry 2005.

202 Johansson 2004.

Figure 8: **Achieving Australia as an Inclusive Learning Society**



In progressing these key pathways in an interactive, whole-of-government/whole-of-society way, points to bear in mind include the following.

Empowering Individuals as Lifelong Learners

This will be a long-term objective requiring considerable cultural change, some increase in resources, and with each of the other pillars contributing. The contribution of all education sectors will be important, as well as that of industry and civil society. Considerable innovation in strategies will be required, especially at the local level, but good practice examples exist across Australia.

Sustaining and Transforming Communities through Learning

This is an area where a body of knowledge on successful strategies is being built up and where immediate gains can be made across Australia through concerted partnership action. Local government is becoming interested and can be a major player in extending community learning partnerships across Australia. Technology, when well used for community purposes, can also make a major contribution. There needs to be more interaction and generation and sharing of new ideas between initiatives across Australia as happens, for example, with the European Union's R3L program on Learning Regions. This is a cost-effective area for investment with multiple benefits for stakeholders in building social, identity, and human capital, and in sustaining cohesive communities.

Using Technology to Extend Learning

There is a growing impact of ICT on communities, the lives of individuals, and business across Australia, and many good practice examples exist. The work of DCITA on ICT, social capital, and communities illustrates the potential, as do various State initiatives and programs such as the Microsoft/Smith Family Unlimited Potential program. While the technology/community interface has been well explored, learning strategies have often been less a part of the scenario. Although current access and equity thrusts need to be continued, the need exists to promote more convergence of community building, technology, and learning strategies in areas such as regional development, as well as in a range of local contexts.

Developing the Workplace as a Key Learning Environment

This is a key requirement of the global knowledge economy, as well as for strategic responses to all other drivers discussed in this report such as demographic change and the ageing of the workforce. How best to integrate work and learning so as to promote learning throughout life in the workforce, will require continuing attention and research. Technology can make a valuable contribution with innovative approaches to e-learning, and a growing number of good practice examples exist. Employers will benefit from holistic strategies that build social and identify capital, and which contribute to a more motivated workforce with the

values and attributes employers require. This in turn will contribute to the capacity of the workforce for innovation and enterprise. Employers are key stakeholders, and need to be active partners in building an embedded learning culture, and learning society.

Extending and Connecting Partnerships and Networks

A learning society is driven by a rich web of connected and interacting learning partnerships and networks. Technology provides new ways of promoting this process. This is an area where considerable innovation is required in devising more points of intersection and interaction. A national framework, and improved information flows, might facilitate this process. Business will benefit from being an active partner.

Immediate Priorities

While action along each of these pathways is necessary in building an inclusive learning society, the analysis of this report points to the following immediate priorities to provide a basis and infrastructure to progress all these action areas.

1. **Institute a national campaign for learning** to achieve a proper awareness and understanding in the community of the significance and benefits of learning throughout life.
2. **Encourage and support the extension of community learning partnerships** across Australia in many contexts.
3. **Build up the research and knowledge base on lifelong learning** including establishing a national focal point with links to all relevant sources.
4. **Continue to promote innovation in the role of technology in** supporting learning in many contexts including fostering a convergence of community building, technology, and learning strategies.
5. **Target disadvantage and exclusion** through action across the priority areas identified above.

The agenda suggested above to progress Australia towards achieving an inclusive learning society, will require new forms of partnership involving all stakeholders,

vision, and considerable innovation. Examples of action taken by countries such as Germany, Canada, the UK and the Nordic countries (as well as the European Union) provide models for a contemporary 21st century approach to fostering learning throughout life in society, and building an inclusive learning society. The agenda suggested above would provide a starting point for a comprehensive and coherent approach to the question raised by the Smith Family – and others – as to how the benefits of learning could be extended to communities and citizens nationwide.

What Kind of National Framework?

The pervasive nature of learning in many contexts in contemporary society throws up the question of how best to concert action in coherent and comprehensive strategies that have the support of all stakeholders. There is no simple answer to this question which requires extensive discussion.

There does seem to be a strong case for a national focal point to give visibility and prominence in the community to national objectives and priorities, to encourage collaboration, partnership and innovation, and to broker alliances to promote learning throughout life.

Options that might be considered include:

- (1) An **Australia Learning Council or Foundation** that provides leadership from prominent Australians across a range of sectors.
- (2) A **National Alliance for Learning** which associates the efforts of a range of organisations with an interest in promoting learning in Australian society.
- (3) A **Commonwealth/State Government Body** possibly at a Ministerial level.

Other options no doubt exist. Options (1) and (2) would be strengthened if supported by a Commonwealth/State Ministerial Statement setting out principles and objectives, possibly along the lines of the 1999 MCEETYA Adelaide Declaration on National Goals for Schooling in the Twenty-first Century.[203]

A major cultural change, such as that involved in building Australia as a learning society requires above all vision, leadership and partnership, so that some agreed statement of principles and objectives would seem necessary. Canada provides an interesting example where a National Summit on Innovation and Learning held in

[203] MCEETYA 1999.

2002, following extensive discussion across Canada, led to a five point Action Plan with building Canada as a learning society the first objective of the Plan.

The options suggested above, along with other options, require considerable discussion in the community, and by stakeholders. A way to progress consideration of how to achieve a national framework for lifelong learning was recommended in a submission from the Council of Australian State Libraries.

> *The Council of Australian State Libraries recommends that the Federal Government establish and support a mechanism to develop a national framework for lifelong learning, and that all key sectors involved in the provision of lifelong learning be included. Issues such as increasing information literacy in the community, access and affordability of technology and integration between sectors could be addressed within this framework.*[204]

There is considerable merit in this recommendation, which I support, as a way to progress towards a necessary national framework for lifelong learning in Australia, and for building Australia as an inclusive learning society.

Building on Recent Initiatives

I have pointed to a range of initiatives to promote learning throughout life taken by communities, organisations, firms and State and Commonwealth Governments that could be brought together in a more coherent framework to advance learning in Australian society. At a national level these include:

- initiatives taken by the Department of Education, Science and Training including the You Can Too project on adult learning and action to foster literacy outcomes of schooling for all students;
- action taken by the Department of Communications, Information Technology and the Arts to promote the use of ICT in Australian society, including community connectivity initiatives;
- the work of the Department of Transport and Regional Services on sustainable regions;
- the work of ABS in building indicators for social capital.

Other examples could no doubt be added.

Similar initiatives exist at the State level, in some cases being merged in more coherent and comprehensive frameworks, as in the case of Tasmania's vision to build a State of Learning. Overall, there is substantial experience and insights

[204] Council of Australian State Libraries 2005, p.5.

across Australia that could be mobilised for the common good. It is inefficient and wasteful not to do so.

What Happens Next?

This report has been prepared for Adult Learning Australia. It expresses the personal views, research and consultations of the author. It will be for the Board of ALA to decide on the follow up action to be taken in consultation with the wide range of stakeholders with an interest. However, it is the hope of those associated with this project that the report will stimulate widespread discussion across Australia of the necessary steps to be taken to achieve Australia as an inclusive and successful 21st century learning society.

Investing in Australia's Future

Time Magazine in a recent special issue on *How China's Growing Influence is Reaching Australia* compared the cultural habits of Australians and Chinese.

> *The Chinese are renowned for taking the long view. Australians, generally more easy-going, look ahead about as far as the weekend.*[205]

In the 21st century context discussed in this report – marked by dynamic and unpredictable change, threat and opportunity – it is imperative to go beyond the habits and culture of the "Lucky Country", and invest in Australia's future by strategic action to build Australia's human resources through learning throughout life in many contexts. And in doing this, foster a culture that encourages and supports learning, creativity, innovation; and opportunities for all. As Deming observed:

> *Learning is not compulsory, but neither is survival!*

[205] Time, 25 April 2005.

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Appendix 1

National Conversation on Learning

Key Themes from the Consultations Held Across Australia for the Lifelong Learning Project

1. There was general agreement in all meetings that the concept of lifelong learning was not well understood in Australian society, and was commonly confused with access to the formal education system.
    - There was consequently limited understanding of the relevance of learning throughout life to the 21st century imperatives set out in the discussion paper.
    - Lifelong learning was seldom seen as a survival issue.

2. There was a consensus in meetings that lifelong learning should be seen as including formal, non-formal, and informal modes of learning, with informal learning in many contexts increasingly important.

3. There was a general recognition that comprehensive connected strategies were needed to ensure that the wider benefits of learning were achieved across sectors such as health, welfare, supporting families and communities, and building social and identity capital.
    - The conceptual model adopted for the project involving human, social, and identity capital was seen as useful.

4. The four scenarios in the discussion paper were generally not seen as options, but rather most meetings considered that all options were needed.
    - In particular, the view was commonly expressed that a national framework was needed to support local initiatives.
    - The growing significance of civil society attracted attention.

5. There was wide agreement that local community initiatives of various kinds to build community learning partnerships should be seen as the foundation for building Australia as an inclusive learning society.

6. The relevance of the key drivers in the discussion paper (globalisation, demographic change, knowledge economy etc) was recognised. Suggested additions to this list included diversity, shifts in lifestyle, and the major global issues such as those set out in (14) below.

7. There was wide agreement that holistic strategies were required that integrated social, economic, educational, and cultural objectives.

8. While Australia lacks a national framework for lifelong learning, a wide range of good practice examples were cited during the consultations.

9. There are signs of change in some States in a move towards greater recognition that lifelong learning is required in a context of exponential change

- Tasmania provides a good example of a comprehensive approach underpinned by a policy and conceptual framework set out in two reports on lifelong learning.

10. A significant development lies in the development of mechanisms in two States to integrate learning and skill strategies and to replace former State training authorities.

11. The key role of technology in supporting learning in many contexts was widely recognised in the consultations.
    - The need to ensure that all Australians achieved digital literacy was a major theme.

12. The growing interest of local government councils in learning community strategies was evident. While initiatives such as the Hume Global Learning Village, Yarra Ranges Learning Communities, Marion, and Salisbury provide examples where an explicit learning community vision exists, in other cases (such as Brisbane City Council) a number of projects are widening learning opportunities without an explicit badging linked to lifelong learning.

13. There was general interest in the role of public libraries as community learning centres, and a persistent view that this role will extend.

14. Some consultations, although not all, considered that a learning society development needed to be underpinned by a vision of Australian society that included addressing major issues such as environment, sustainability, and the implications of growing diversity in Australian society and globally.

Comments on any of these points are invited, and may be sent to me before 30 April at p.kearns@netspeed.com.au (telephone 02/62314125)

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Visiting Research Fellow
Adult Learning Australia

April 2005

Attachment 2

THE NORDIC WAY

In 2001 OECD made an assessment of the performance by Member countries in implementing coherent and comprehensive policies for lifelong learning. The countries in the top category were the Nordic countries (Sweden, Finland, Denmark, Norway).

> *The Nordic countries stand out with good performance across multiple sectors.*[206]

Two years later in its report on *Adult Learning Policies and Practices,* OECD commented further on the performance of the Nordic countries in the following terms.

> *Denmark, Finland, Norway, Sweden and the United Kingdom have a broader vision of the concept of lifelong learning for personal, professional, economic, and social reasons, made explicit in one single document or policy. These countries focus on ensuring learning opportunities for all adults. Learning is seen as important from an economic perspective of increased productivity, but also from a more personal and social perspective concerned with social and democratic values and attitudes.*[207]

While the roots of the Nordic Way to building a learning culture and society may be traced back into history with such initiatives as Folk High Schools and the fostering of study circles, each of the Nordic countries has taken initiatives in recent years to strengthen adult learning in coherent and comprehensive policies for lifelong learning. The key role of local authorities is a feature of the Nordic Way. As OECD observes, the Nordic countries have a broad vision of lifelong learning which is seen as important for social, personal, economic, and civic reasons, and as a foundation of successful democratic societies in these countries. This vision is supported by a strong investment in education.

Sweden

Sweden has been developing a learning culture and opportunities for lifelong learning for all through a number of stages over a considerable period of time. As Sohlman observes in his analysis of the culture of adult learning in Sweden:

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206 OECD 2001b, p.64.

207 OECD 2003, p.71.

The learning culture of a country is, of course, embedded in its wider social, cultural and economic history.[208]

Current Swedish development towards a democratic learning society may be traced back to a range of popular movements which impacted on Swedish society in the late nineteenth century. These movements led to such initiatives as the folk high schools and study associations and the pervasive concept that popular adult education should aim at fostering democratic values and encouraging the participation in education of disadvantaged groups.[209] These concepts have guided Swedish policy for education and learning over the past century and more.

While much early Swedish policy for education and learning was top-down, devolution reforms in the 1960s and 1970s led to extensive devolution of responsibility to the local level with the key role of the municipalities providing an infrastructure for local collaboration and partnership in responding to local needs.[210] This was an era that saw Swedish innovations such as the concepts of recurrent education and youth guarantee and the Education Leave Act of 1974.[211]

The ongoing development of popular adult education in Sweden has continued to be directed at promoting social well-being, strengthening democratic values and cultural life, and meeting the needs of individuals. Swedish agencies such as the Swedish Agency for Flexible Learning, the Swedish National Council of Adult Education have contributed to these objectives, along with the important role of the municipalities.

The Swedish approach to adult learning and building a learning society was further strengthened with the *Adult Education Initiative* of 1997-2002. AEI was directed to raise the educational attainment of adults with limited secondary school education through flexible provision of upper secondary education. 90,000 places were allocated annually.[212]

The Swedish Parliament in 2001 set new goals and strategies for adult learning. These included more flexible support for individual learning and a more learner-

208 Sohlman 1998, p.169.

209 Ibid, p.164.

210 Kearns and Papadopoulos 2000, p.19.

211 Sohlman 1998, p.170.

212 Ibid, p.99.

centred approach, developing competence in industry, and providing a broad range of financial assistance.[213]

Overall, Sweden is of considerable interest in showing a country with a long history of investment in adult learning where a broad and integrated approach is taken to the various social, personal, civic, and economic objectives of adult learning, and with a learning culture where learning is valued throughout life, has been actively fostered. Most of these characteristics may be found in the other Nordic countries.

Finland

Finland provides a further example of the broad Nordic approach to adult learning that supports the personal development of the individual, promoting democratic values and social cohesion, while also fostering innovation and productivity.[214] Finland has been particularly successful in carrying through a range of reforms in the 1990s which have integrated measures to integrate lifelong learning objectives with economic objectives. The outcomes are reflected in Finland's performance in a number of international assessments including performance in the OECD PISA assessment of school performance.

Finland's reform efforts during the 1990s were stimulated by the collapse of the former Soviet Union and the need to develop a new basis for economic survival. The reform efforts include the establishment of a new national network of polytechnics and the *Joy of Learning* report of 1997 which sets out a comprehensive framework for progressing lifelong learning in Finland.

The Joy of Learning report set out a comprehensive foundation for learning throughout life with a broad spectrum of learning opportunities, improved arrangements for recognition of prior learning, measures to facilitate individual learning pathways, study leave provisions, arrangements for labour market training, and reform of education legislation.[215]

As in Sweden, the municipalities have a key role in strategies to meet local needs, while the significance of informal learning is recognised in the arrangements for the recognition of prior learning. Access has been a prime objective with continuing education centres, open polytechnics, and the open university all having important roles.

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213 Ibid, p.99.

214 Ministry of Education Finland 1997, p.2.

215 Ibid, p.2.

The philosophical underpinnings of a comprehensive national lifelong learning strategy are well set out in the premises of Finland's National Lifelong Learning Strategy. They include the following.

> - *The only way to respond adequately to the need for broadly based, continuous learning caused by this social change is to provide learning in very aspect of people's lives.*
> - *An open and enquiring approach to the new is the individual path open to every Finn that will lead to a fuller life and to the pleasures to be gained in achieving something.*
> - *The goal in shaping the learning career of individuals is that people will have a positive attitude towards institutional, aesthetic, moral and social growth such as will enable them to acquire the knowledge, skills, capacities and understandings they will need in the various situations which they will be confronted during their lives.*[216]

Finland's National Lifelong Learning Strategy recognises that lifelong learning operates on a number of levels. In addition to the individual person it also covers the communities in which people live and work and the social parameters which shape their opportunities for action.[217] This is summed up in Finland's concept of the realisation throughout society of a broadly based and continuous process of learning.

Norway

Norway shares most of the aspirations and characteristics of the other Nordic countries with a strong commitment to lifelong learning and with an intensive period of reform during the 1990s. The main focus of the adult learning reforms was the Competence Reform of 1999 which was then a key aspect of an OECD Review of Norwegian Policies for Education leading to an OECD report in 2002 titled *Lifelong Learning in Norway*.[218] Papers prepared for the OECD review provide valuable insights into education reform and the development of lifelong learning in Norway.

The Norwegian Competencies Reform of 1999 aimed to increase the competence of the population, create a more integrated, co-ordinated and coherent education

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216 Ibid, p.2.

217 Ibid, p.2.

218 OECD 2002b.

system, and provide a basis for lifelong learning in Norway.[219] The workplace was recognised as a key context for learning. The broad concept of competence adopted, which later had its counterpart in the OECD DeSeCo report on key competencies,[220] was a distinctive feature.

> *Competency shall be a basis for action, creativity, and intuition and ethical judgement and discernment*[221]

This broad concept of competence, which contrasts with the vocational orientation of competency based training in Australia, is as relevant to life in society as it is to the workplace, and reflects the holistic orientation of the Nordic Way in which social, cultural and economic objectives are integrated.

The Norwegian Competency Reforms aimed to raise the educational level of the entire adult population, while also meeting the needs of the labour market for skills.[222] The existence of the OECD 2002 report on lifelong learning in Norway provides a valuable source of information on lifelong learning policy in Norway. The developmental concept of competence in the 1999 reforms was subsequently picked up in the OECD DeSeCo program on key competencies.

Denmark

Denmark, like Sweden, has historical roots which provided a basis for embedding lifelong learning in Danish culture, while also like Sweden having recent adult education reforms which built on these roots. Denmark may also be seen as one of the pioneers in developing a modern holistic approach to adult learning, and a national framework for lifelong learning.

The Adult Education Reform of 2000 aimed to integrate the continuing training and further education programs into a single, coherent, and transparent adult education system.[223] These reforms built on earlier 1995 reforms which established a ten-item plan which included the policy of free admission to training courses for all. As in the other Nordic countries, responsibility is shared between the state and local government, so that municipal provision can be responsive to local needs.

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219 OECD 2002b, p.25.

220 Rychen & Salganik 2003.

221 OECD 2002b, p.26.

222 OECD 2002a, p.96.

223 OECD 2002a, p.94.

The Nordic Performance

The priority given by the Nordic countries to education and lifelong learning is reflected in performance outcomes across a number of fields. These include assessment of school outcomes for 15 year olds under the OECD Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), assessments of literacy in adult population 16-65, measures of trust for the World Values study, assessments of Innovative Capacity under the Innovation Index, and ICT League assessments.

While PISA assessments were initially focussed on key school subjects (reading literacy, mathematical literacy, engagement in reading. Scientific literacy), PISA 2003 broke new ground by assessing cross-curricular competencies for problem solving.[224] This gave for the first time an assessment of life competencies that apply across different areas of school curriculum. I have also drawn on the IEA data from the Progress in Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS).

School Outcomes at Age 15 from PISA and from PIRLS

Some examples of strong performance by Nordic countries in areas of PISA 2000 and PISA 2003, are

- Nordic countries (Norway, Denmark, Iceland) had the top three places in the PISA 2000 assessment of self-regulated learning.[225]
- Finland was the top country in the PISA 2003 measures of cross-curricular competencies for problem solving.[226]
- Finland was the top country in the PISA 2000 assessment of reading literacy with the highest proportion of students at Levels 3-5 and fewest at Levels 1 and 2.[227] OECD noted, "Finland shares unparalleled overall performance almost two-thirds of a proficiency level ahead of the OECD average".[228]
- On the PIRLS reading literacy scale, 4th grade students in Sweden perform significantly higher than their counterparts in all other OECD countries, with a mean score that is 32 points higher than the OECD average.[229]

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224 OECD 2004.

225 OECD 2003c, pp.114-126.

226 OECD 2004, pp.40-44.

227 OECD 2003c, pp.69-81.

228 Ibid, p.74.

229 Ibid, p.63.

- Finland was top country in the PISA 2000 assessment of engagement in reading which measures motivation for reading, interest, and time spent.[230]
- Finland and Iceland were among the six best-performing countries in mathematical literacy under PISA 2000[231] with Finland ranked third in scientific literacy.[232]

Literacy Levels in Adult Population 16-65, 1994-98

- Sweden, Norway, and Denmark were the top three countries in the OECD assessment of adult literacy of the adult population 16-65, 1994-98 for prose, document, and quantitative literacy.[233]

Assessment of Trust in the World Values Study, 1995-96

- Norway, Sweden, and Denmark were the top three countries in the assessment of trust in the 1995-96 World Values Study with the highest proportion of people saying that most people can be trusted.[234]

Innovation Index Rankings

- Finland was ranked second and Sweden sixth on the 2003 rankings of the Innovative Capacity Ranking.[235]

ICT League for Global Information Technology Report

- Nordic countries were ranked second (Iceland), third (Finland), fourth (Denmark), and sixth (Sweden) in the Global Information Technology Report for 2004-2005 prepared for the March 2005 World Economic Forum, with Singapore first, the United States fifth and Australia eleventh.[236]

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230 Ibid, pp.107-111.

231 Ibid, pp.82-85.

232 Ibid, pp.86-90.

233 OECD 2001a, p.21. Finland was also ranked third for prose literacy and fifth for document literacy.

234 OECD 2001a, The percentages were 65.3, 59.7 and 57.7 with Australia 39.9%.

235 Stern 2004, p.40. These rankings are derived from the American National Innovative Capacity Project involving research of Michael Porter, Scott Stern, Jeffrey Furman, and Joshua Gaus. Australia was franked fifteenth in the 2003 rankings.

236 World Economic Forum 2005. The Global Information Technology Report was introduced in 2001 and has been updated each year. The Networked Readiness Index Ranking (ICT League) are a key aspect of the Report. See www.weforum.org/site/homepublic.nsf/.

Global Competitiveness Report 2004-2005

- The Global Competitiveness Report 2004-2005 prepared for the March 2005 World Economic Forum assessed Finland as the top country with Sweden third, Denmark fifth, and Norway sixth. The United States was ranked second and Australia fourteenth.[237]

What Drives the Strong Nordic Performance?

While a range of factors no doubt drives the strong performance of the Nordic countries across the range of indicators cited above, there is a good case that the large investment by these countries in education and lifelong learning has been a significant influence, leading to the building up of a learning culture and strong social and human capital. The Nordic countries provide the best portrait up to now of the features, characteristics, and outcomes of a learning society.

These questions bear on the question of how human capital is developed, maintained, and used, and the roles of social and identify capital in this process. OECD in its work on social and human capital has pointed to some influences:

- the cultural context affects learning;
- social networks are important for learning;
- social networks help to foster learning throughout life;
- families are primary building blocks for social capital;
- trust and civic engagement are likely to be inter-related;
- civil society is important in the development of social capital. [238]

The question of the role and significance of social capital in the Nordic countries assumes significance in this context. These are high trust societies as shown by successive World Values Studies, with high levels of participation in adult education, and considerable devolution of responsibility to local communities. This suggests the strong development of social capital in the Nordic countries, with the influence of culture on such features of these societies as school performance, motivation and capability for innovation, and the capacity to carry through innovation in such areas as networked readiness ("ICT League").

While these qualities merit further examination, the situation with aspects such as social capital is nevertheless complex, as an overview by Bo Rothstein of social

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237 World Economic Forum 2005b, 104 economies were included in the Global Competitiveness Index so that the strong performance of the Nordic countries is notable..

238 OECD 2001c, pp.20-45.

capital in Sweden shows.[239] Further work is needed on the influence of social capital and culture on educational and economic outcomes in the context of the global knowledge society and economy.

The situation of Finland is particularly interesting in the light of the strong performance of Finland across a range of education performance and knowledge economy indicators. Finland has a strong commitment to building a learning society directed at both personal fulfilment and successful outcomes in a knowledge economy, with these themes integrated in the 1997 Joy of Learning report which set out Finland's Strategy for Lifelong Learning. The themes in this report, such as providing learning in every aspect of people's lives, "an open and enquiring approach to the new as the individual path open to every Finn", point to the Finnish way towards a "successful life and a well-functioning society"[240] in a world of dynamic change and turbulence.

There are strong grounds to give attention to the lessons of the Nordic Way towards building an inclusive and successful learning society.

[239] Rothstein 2002, pp.289-330.

[240] The goals of the OECD DeSeCo program on key competencies. See Rychen and Salganik 2003.

Attachment 3

THE IMPERATIVE NEED FOR A NATIONAL CAMPAIGN FOR LEARNING

1. 21st century Australia is confronted by the unprecedented challenge of an environment marked by the on-going and escalating impact of globalisation, the knowledge society and economy, demographic change, dynamic technologies, major changes in work and the labour market, lifestyle shifts and a growing individualisation of society, and the challenge of sustaining families and communities in this context.

2. This environment is marked by an exponential pace of change, the blurring of many familiar concepts and boundaries, and the overturning of traditional paradigms.
    - New times bring new realities, require new responses, and certain essential underpinnings.

3. In this context, all Australians need to be motivated and enabled to continue learning throughout life in order to
    a. build a workforce that is flexible, creative, innovative, and able to adapt to changing conditions;
    b. maintain their employability throughout working life;
    c. enhance their quality of life and personal fulfilment;
    d. sustain and transform families and communities in difficult periods of adjustment to change;
    e. advance active citizenship in Australian democracy at all levels.

4. Consultations undertaken by Adult Learning Australia in all States for a project on future directions for lifelong learning in Australia have shown that the imperative need for lifelong learning for all in 21st century Australia is poorly understood so that this critical national objective is not actively supported by the full range of stakeholders.

5. A contemporary 21st century approach to learning throughout life should include formal, non-formal, and informal modes of learning that occurs in many contexts, and which is increasingly facilitated by information and communication technology.
    - The workplace and home are key learning contexts, while libraries, museums, art galleries, clubs, and societies have important learning roles.

6. While there are many splendid examples across Australia that extend learning opportunities throughout life, these tend to be fragmented and not integrated in coherent and comprehensive frameworks to build Australia as an inclusive learning society.
    - The ALA project and consultations showed a strong demand for such a framework to support local initiatives.

7. Local initiatives that build community learning partnerships of many kinds provide the foundation for building Australia as an inclusive and successful learning society able to adapt to changing conditions.
    - A range of models now exist, the challenge is now to extend these to all communities across Australia recognising the diversity that exists between communities and systems.

8. At present, adult learning is mainly promoted nationally through the annual Adult Learners Week, the requirement is now for on-going promotion of learning through a national campaign.
    - Local promotion is also undertaken through activities such as learning festivals.

9. Such a National Campaign for Learning could be supported by a National Alliance for Learning which associated a range of organisations, such as Adult Learning Australia and the Australian Library and Information Association, with the objectives of the campaign, possibly with corporate and government sponsorship.

10. Initial priorities for a national campaign might include workplace learning, learning in the home, and in communities, with strategies such as community learning partnerships promoted.

11. Local government is a key stakeholder in supporting local community initiatives with a number of good practice models now emerging across Australia which integrate local community learning initiatives with the social, cultural, and economic planning of councils. These models need to be extended to all communities across Australia.
    - Further exemplars exist in initiatives taken by leading OECD countries such as Germany, the UK, Sweden, and Canada.

12. A National Campaign for Learning is necessary to promote better awareness and understanding of the significance of learning throughout life for all Australians, and as a foundation for increased collaboration and partnership between the key stakeholders in building Australia as an inclusive and successful learning society.

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