

LINK 8: REVIEW: QUEENSLAND POLICY DOCUMENTS – Overview

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May 2008

1. Introduction

This overview provides a summary analysis of a selection of documents released by Education Queensland – from *Queensland State Education 2010* published in 1999 through to *What state schools value* published in 2008. Detailed analyses of each document follows.

The documents included in the analysis ranged from strategic system-wide policy documents through to those more targeted at the school level. As such, it is difficult to draw definitive conclusions when comparing the various foci of such a suite of documents as their purposes and audiences are varied. However, a number of general observations can be made.

The analysis of the documents focused on the public purposes of schooling. In general, it could be argued that until the release of *What state schools value*, there was a steady decline in the attention paid to the public purposes of schooling, at least as it represented in the documents reviewed. By contrast, the attention afforded to the private purposes of schooling expanded, with an overall concomitant narrowing of the purposes of schooling.

2. Process used to conduct the document analysis

At a global level, the intended audience and length of each document was noted. The location and terminology of public purpose statements were also noted, as was the context and prominence of these statements. Links, if any, to other documents were recorded. Several dimensions were used in examining each document at a closer level. These included the changing context within which schools/education now operate and the impact of this context on schools/education, key purposes for schooling today and in the future, enactment and achievement of public purposes in schools, evidence that public purposes were being met, lack of fulfilment and any other relevant general matters.

A series of questions was generated for each of these categories in an endeavour to identify evidence of public purposes in relation to private purposes; who was responsible for their enactment of public purposes in schools and in the education system at large; and, any overall comments of note to emerge during the analysis.

The documents were broadly categorised as being related to policy, teaching or accountability. They are listed below in summary form.

| Queensland documents analysed | Date | Type |
|------------------------------------------|-------------|-------------|
| <i>Queensland State Education 2010</i> | 1999 | Policy |
| <i>Queensland Curriculum, Assessment</i> | | |

| | | |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------|------------------------------------------------------------|
| <i>& Reporting Framework (QCAR)</i> | c2005 | Teaching/ Operationalise 2010 |
| <i>QCAR-Essential Learnings Information Statement</i> | 2007 | Teaching/ Operationalise 2010 |
| <i>QCAR-KLAs and syllabus-re-release 2009</i> | 2007 | Teaching/ Operationalise 2010 |
| <i>School Improvement and Accountability (SIAF)</i> | 2006 | Administrative/ Accountability – Operationalise 2010 |
| <i>SIAF, Revised 2007</i> | 2007 | Administrative/ Accountability – Operationalise 2010 |
| <i>Department of Education, Training & The Arts Strategic Plan 2007-2011</i> | 2007 | Policy |
| <i>Budget highlights</i> | 2007 | Policy |
| <i>What state schools value</i> | 2008 | Policy and teaching |
| Other documents | | |
| <i>The Future of Schooling in Australia</i> | 2007 | Policy |

3. Changing context and its impact on schools and on the education system

The forces impacting on schooling were discussed explicitly in *Queensland State education 2010* and mentioned in the *SIAF* document from 2006. *2010* was intended as a “blueprint” of sorts for schooling for the future in Queensland and thus canvassed key forces and issues that schools and schooling needed to take account of, and identified key priorities for the future. In a similar vein, and at a national level, changes since the development of the Adelaide Declaration of 1999 (at about the same time *2010* was released) were presented as the rationale for the *Future of Schooling in Australia* (Council for the Federation). There are similarities in many of the contextual statements in the *2010* and *Future of Schooling in Australia* documents.

State Education 2010 made mention of: family structure and character, interculturality, economic change, globalisation and how it has changed the role of government, Information technology, workforce skills and competitiveness.

The document stressed economic change as a key force on, and driver of education. For example, it was noted that “**there is a need for a redefinition of the purpose of**

public education that meets the unique challenge posed by the transition of a globalised knowledge economy and society” (p. 8 - emphasis added). As a consequence of these changes, it was argued, the year twelve retention rate needed to be increased. Thus the amount of vocational education offered in the senior years needed to be expanded. The education system also needed to respond to the changes in the types of skills required for school leavers to take up work. Further, it was asserted that, globalisation had made multiculturalism easier. Schools needed to respond to multiculturalism by increasing students’ intercultural understanding and social harmony. It is noted that public purposes are not as explicitly referred to in subsequent documents until *What State Schools Value* which was published in 2008.

The SIAF 2006 document contains a focus on government reforms and requirements. To provide context, key messages from a range of other major documents were noted, together with a diagram of ‘the interrelationships between government outcomes and profiles and the Department’s strategic documents in providing direction and support for state schools’ (p. 3). The 2007 *QCAR: Key learning area (KLA) syllabuses* emphasised schooling’s link with the development of Queensland as ‘the smart state’. In this sense it was essentially economic in nature, emphasising skills and education development for economic growth and development.

4. Alignment of documents

While there appeared to be some level of connection across the documents, it could be extrapolated from the strategic plan that the new mega-department (created 2006) had resulted in changes and realignments within the department and within policy. The SIAF documents also seemed to be more bureaucratic and managerial in nature and focus than indicated by *2010* and *QCAR*. The *SIAF* document defines what schools need to formally report on – to the system, to the school community – there is little focus on issues/outcomes that might be related to public purposes as opposed to requirements about academic achievement, enrolments finances and so on. As noted by the critics of corporate managerialism (eg. Considine 1988), there appeared to be a mismatch in the documents between the devolution and diversity of school-based management and the requirement to adhere to somewhat strict guidelines and checklists for reporting to parliament, etc. While these documents indicate a growing dominance of economic or private purposes, the *What state schools value* could be considered a significant reversal of a trend and potentially heralding a new, overt and significant commitment to the public purposes of schooling.

5. Language

As might be expected, the language and tone in these documents varies according to the type of document and the intended audience. The language/terminology (some of these are titles of particular initiatives) evident in these documents that had some connections with public purposes included the following: diversity, community interculturality, multiculturalism, social harmony, engaging, indigenous students, partners for success, new deal on equity, social and cultural, participation, consultation and collaboration, accountability and citizenship. The language /terminology related to private and/or economic purposes included (some of these could also be linked to public purposes): economic, training, VET-in-Schools, globalisation, knowledge economy, TAFE and lifelong learning. It is interesting to

note how the term ‘lifelong learning’ is used. In these documents the notion seems to be used in terms that denote private (or at least economic) rather than public purposes of education. It is associated with achieving an increased year twelve retention rate, which is allied with increases in VET-in-School programs and post-school TAFE, training and apprenticeships. Lifelong learning was cast as being about continually matching workforce skills to economic need.

Policy documents aimed at a wide audience (strategic documents) such as *State Education 2010*, *What state schools value*, the 2007-08 Budget Highlights and *The Future of Schooling in Australia*, for instance, tend to contain more language aligned with notions of public purposes of education, than do some of the other more school/teaching focused and accountability documents. This is an important point – does it mean that when talking at a general level, attention is given to public purposes, but when the focus is at the school level, such notions are ignored. That is, is there a question of rhetoric at the strategic policy level versus a lack of reality at the school level?

As noted, until *What state schools value*, few of the documents written in the 1999-2005 period overtly expressed public purpose sentiments. This document (full title: *What state school value: Active and informed citizens for a sustainable world*) is framed around five overarching learning organisers: the healthy citizen, the informed citizen, the democratic citizen, the creative citizen and the eco-citizen.

Prominence of Public Purpose Statements

Public purpose statements were highly visible in *2010*, *QCAR*, *What state schools value* and to some extent in the *Strategic plan* but much less so in the other documents. In most documents, public purposes statements were sometimes separate stand-alone statements and other times embedded in other statements, usually ones that involved what might be considered the private purposes of education. In these latter statements, there was almost a tension between the two purposes. Overall, the greatest number and highest prominence of public purpose statements appeared to be in *2010* and the *What state schools values*, followed by *QCAR* and *The agency budget highlights*. The strategic plan and the *SIAF* documents tended to be more bureaucratic and managerial in nature than the policy and teaching documents.

Economic purposes were also given prominence in most of the documents. There was a tendency to emphasise economic and workforce skills, training and the knowledge economy to a greater extent in most of the later documents (except for the *value statement*) than in the earlier documents, But the economic theme was highly visible in all documents, often in competition with themes of the social, cultural and political purposes of education.

From a chronological perspective, by the time of publication of the *SIAF* documents, the purpose of schooling in Queensland had come to revolve strongly around the ‘Smart State’ agenda of the Queensland government – the ‘Smart State’ agenda impacted across all government departments and set the macro-policy framework for all departments, especially education. Also occurring at this time, and as part of the ‘Smart State’ agenda, was the implementation of preparatory year in schools and the

objective of achieving as close as possible a full year twelve retention rate. The latter objective is related to skills and the workforce, and the changes necessary for Queensland to become a key player in the knowledge economy (SIAF 2006).

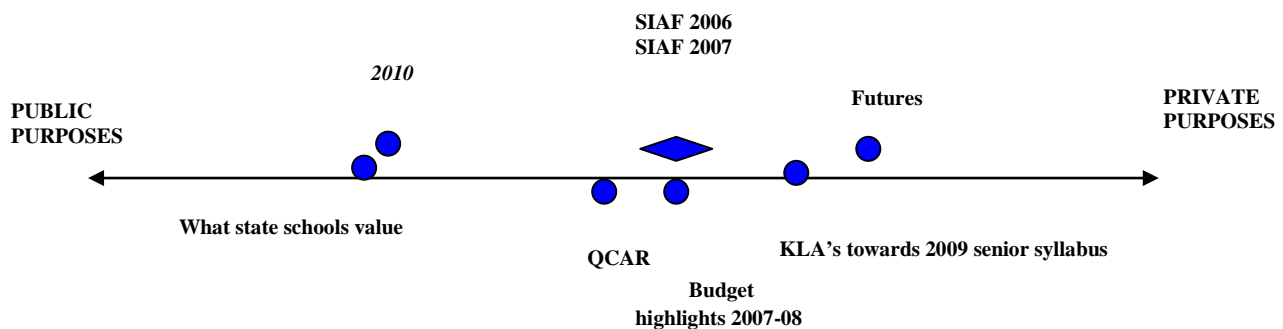
It is not possible to determine from the budget highlights how much money flows to public purposes and how much money flows to private purposes. The budget does suggest that money is being allocated to equity groups, especially children-at-risk in terms of literacy, and deaf and hearing impaired children; to the professional development of teachers; to the employment of a greater number of teachers and teachers' aides; and to Prep. However, significant monies are allocated to training and to VET-in-School.

6. Intergovernmental relations

Intergovernmental relations also featured in the changes between the earlier and later documents. The earlier documents referred to Queensland education seeking an influencing role in the national agenda. In later documents, in consideration of the state-federal tensions, it is evident that Queensland schools were required to conform to national as well as state legislative requirements, especially in terms of reporting and national standardised testing.

From the late 1990s, and with the exception of *What state schools value*, there appeared to be a narrowing of the agenda from a broad range of public purposes to a more limited focus. There was increased attention in later documents, especially when considering the 2007-08 budget highlights, to vocational education and training, and allocation of training resources to 'target industries'. In addition, later documents revealed the growing domination of national legislative requirements, which also seemed to narrow the schooling purposes agenda, and public purposes in particular.

Categorisation of documents on the public purposes/private purposes continuum



7. Responsibility and accountability

In *State Education 2010* responsibility for the enactment of public purposes was seen in large part to reside with schools. Schools were accountable to parents for the achievement of these purposes but the Department was responsible to government. The means of accountability here, however, was to be through 'key performance measures'. Such performance management are indicative of managerialism. With respect to the curriculum documents, the *Queensland Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Framework* (QCAR), the Queensland Studies Authority was considered accountable to the government for the trial.

A number of documents were developed from QCAR including those relating to *Key Learning Areas* and *Essential Learnings*. The document on Key Learning Areas was in preparation for the re-release of the syllabus in 2009. Here, it appears that the enactment of the public purposes of schooling was to be articulated in the syllabus which each school responsible for the enactment of these purposes in terms of the specifics most relevant to each of their communities. By contrast, *Budget highlights* indicate that the government is accountable to parliament and the people for the prioritisation of the purposes of schooling and the enactment of those purposes.

By way of the *School Improvement and Accountability* documents of 2006 and 2007, formal responsibility and accountability mechanisms for schools were clearly defined. These documents set out the responsibilities of schools under state government requirements and Commonwealth legislative needs. Requirements included annual reports, triennial reviews, reports to parents on children's progress and parent-teacher interviews. Some of the requirements are the same as those for any public sector organisation. The addition of Commonwealth measures that forced schools to comply with particular requirements to be eligible for Commonwealth funding highlights the ways in which the federal government of the time impacted on the responsibilities of the states, especially in relation to education.

According to the 2006 SIAF, decisions about the purposes of schooling were being made by the government, based on community consultation. As in many managerial documents, there was discussion about transparency. In managerial-speak transparency can replace the accountability and responsibility of traditional public services that render them democratic institutions. Under traditional public

administration, transparency is part of but not the whole of the picture. Within the SIAF documents it appeared that decisions about what to include in the accountability documents were largely to be guided by checklists provided by the central department.

The requirements and process for school reviews reporting were spelt out quite explicitly in the document or referred school leaders to checklists on the department's website. With the exception of parental involvement in relation to reporting on students and on school performance, the reporting and review process tended to involve being approved at more senior levels of the department. While the document's authors tend to refer explicitly to state schools, requirements such as furnishing an annual report to parliament and complying with state and national government legislation also apply to the non-state sector. Almost none of what schools were required to report on could be related to public purposes.

8. Summary

A selection of documents on schooling released by Education Queensland between 1999 and 2008 was examined. Until publication of the recent *What state schools value* document, across the past decade or so, there was a narrowing of the purposes of schooling in Queensland away from public purposes to private or economic purposes. This narrowing could be attributed to the contextual changes identified in the documents and to the growing influence of the previous federal government in intergovernmental relations.

In general, the more strategic the document, the more likely it is to contain statements consistent with public purposes. As documents become more orientated to the school level, it becomes evident that priorities other than public purposes become dominant, at least in terms of what schools need to report on, at both local community and systemic levels.

The recent release of *What state schools value* demonstrates an explicit attempt by Education Queensland to raise the profile of public purposes of education in state schools in Queensland. What is to be noted here, is that this statement is about state schools, not non-state schools. That is, the potential impact is likely to be, at best, in just 2 in 3 schools in the state.