# Designing for the future now

### Headst@rt spotlights the work of one the world's foremost experts on contemporary learning, Professor Stephen Heppell

We need to try out new ideas now. Look at ways of designing inspiring buildings that can adapt to educational and technological change.

October 27, 2011

#### All,

Having just enjoyed a remarkable day of conversation and creative energy at the State Library of Queensland, focused on your future learning, I reflected overnight on the remarkable potential that you have to change your own destiny statewide, and the world's too. That doesn't happen very often.

The coincidence of several unique moments has thrown up a once-in-a-generation opportunity for Queensland, as I know many of you have already reflected.

Firstly, next year is the 100-year anniversary of secondary education in Queensland, a chance to be proud of the progress in that first 100 years, but also to look forward to the potential of the next.

Secondly, you have some exceptional young teachers. They entered the profession in times of full employment - with your healthy state economy they could have done anything they wished, but they still chose to teach. Alongside them stand a nearretired group of wise old owls (if I can so characterise them!) approaching retirement but with a robust track record of making change happen, and of coping with change; their careers have been necessarily agile. The combination of these two groups working alongside each other will only be with us for another decade - they are a remarkable asset going forwards.

Thirdly, you face significant changes in the Australian National Curriculum (ACARA), with an increasingly standardised set of tests. This tested new approach won't last of course - the research evidence is damning about high-stakes testing - but it does provide yet another reason to review existing practice today. 2012 will be very different to 2002, or even 2022.

Fourthly, the transition of Year Seven into secondary school is a substantial change - and in a world where playful learning is finally seen to be effective and appropriate, a key challenge will be to retain the playful, autonomous learning from the early years into the secondary years and beyond.

All this offers clear enough opportunities - and good reasons - to explore alternative ways to teach and learn, but there are further drivers of change too: the new technologies in your students' pockets and hands; the plea from employers for new employees that are comfortable with ambiguity, are team players, have ingenuity; the 24/7 connectivity of our world; tightening finances ... and more. This perfect storm of progress is inevitably sweeping away the old factory schools of the last century, but it also provides a unique opportunity to shape what comes next. All around the world teachers and schools are discovering, researching and sharing the new approaches that make learning more engaging and extraordinarily effective. Some of what they have discovered is counter-intuitive, not all of it will suit yourselves, but it is now so easy to reach out to borrow from their tested ingredients to assemble a Queensland recipe that is as world class, and as noticed, as your state library. Inevitably, your future world class learning will look as different as your new library did.

None of this needs to be expensive, though. New approches by and large can be very affordable - are often actually cheaper - and do need to be. It is my simple belief that a world riven by strife can be healed with better learning. Like many of you, I've seen children inoculated against poverty with learning, seen how children who learn together emerge with understanding ahead of hatred. The model you evolve from your unique opportunities will need to be affordable so that others less fortunate might follow your lead. Change, but change cheaply.

The hardest thing to do, with change, is to begin. Circumstances had already begun that change for you. My note here is simply to confirm what many of you are already saying - that here is a unique chance to make the world sit up and take notice, and to mend that world a little too.

Professor Stephen Heppell

A comprehensive list of links for those interested in Professor Stephen Heppell and innovative design is available on the Headst@rt blog. www.couriermail.com.au/headstart

#### Shoeless learning

In Scandinavia many children learn with their shoes off. In many schools worldwide shoeless learning has taken off, despite a lot of

Heppell believes: • Children seem simply to behave better - perhaps it becomes more like home, or for some there is something quite sacred about taking shoes off. The noise is quieter, gentler as children circulate;

- Carpets are much cleaner and children are much more willing to sit on floors. Less furniture makes for a less crowded space too; • Teachers do not end up arguing about the "right kind" of shoes
- An unlikely theory, one that remains untested (and is offered ("no trainers!" - "but sir, it's not a trainer!!"); Slightly tongue in cheek!), is that somehow boys' testosterone is stored in their shoes - so when they take them off, they seem to be
- all-round nicer, gently, quieter; Teachers must take off their shoes too.
- "My bad days don't last long when I am with my students, especially when they are laughing, raising their hands in excitement or their eyes are bulging with something new they have excitement or their eyes are buiging with something new they new learnt. I couldn't think of a more rewarding and happy place to be:"

#### **Creative innovator**

Professor Heppell is an internationally renowned learning consultant and visionary who is at the heart of a global revolution in learning space design. He is involved in a number of innovative building projects around the world.

He is a strong advocate of involving students and believes that children's input can be a significant factor in the design process.

- "Europe's leading online education expert" Microsoft, 2006
- CEO Heppell.net
- Professor at Bournemouth University Chair in New Media Environments at Centre for Excellence for Media Practice
- Emeritus Professor at Anglia Ruskin University, Cambridge • Visiting Professor at the University of Wales
- Pioneer of social networking
- Global leader in learning space design
- 2008 BETT winner for Outstanding Achievement in ICT Education
- "The most influential academic of recent years in the field of technology and education" Department for Education and Skills, UK, 2006
- not-for-profit across the world



couriermail.com.au

hoto: Sarah Marshall

Professor Stephen Heppell with educational professionals at the recent State Library of Queensland lecture on Future Pedagogy - Philosophy to Practicalities.

**Classroom of the future** 

involved in the design of a real learning environment.

The result was "Ingenium", a learning space built with

The designers' starting point was the belief that the

qualities of the learning environment, especially light,

space, colour and sound, make a real difference to the

An interesting feature of this classroom is the internal and

external walls, which students can write and draw directly

The classroom includes toilets, a design request from the

The building is hi-tech and energy efficient, and features a

replication, making this a prototype classroom that can be

The students of today and tomorrow must

change and the emergence of a global

thrive in a world characterised by continuous

knowledge-based economy. In each individual

large, curved teaching space lit by openable roof windows

Classroom of the Future funding in the UK.

speed and enjoyment of learning.

students.

on to. They are blank canvases for work.

and a wall of glass opening on to a terrace.

used in almost all locations.

the brain works.

The Ingenium's prefabricated design allows easy

At Grey Court School in Richmond, Surrey, students were

Has a variety of advisory roles with governments and organisations – both commercial and



No more than three walls so that there is never full enclosure and the space is multifaceted rather than just

open. • No fewer than three points of focus so that the "standand-deliver" model gives way to increasingly varied groups learning and presenting together (which, by the way, requires a radical rethinking of furniture). Ability to accommodate three teachers/adults with their children. The old standard size of about 30 students in a box robbed children of so many effective practices; these larger spaces allow for better alternatives.

creative, independent learner able to assess his or her own learning needs and develop the learning skills to meet those needs. For this to happen we will need to create a new pedagogic paradigm that takes account of changes in technology and in our understanding of how

## Set up a Skype bar at your school

Skype adds another dimension to learning and empowers students

and teachers even further by adding features for collaboration, live video, and instant file sharing. Currently there are more than 17,000 teachers globally using Skype in the classroom. Become involved. See Skype in the classroom: education.skype.com





Image source: www.imgineschooldesign.org



Thailand Knowledge Park,

Central World, Bangkok.