

OECD CERI GOVERNING BOARD

Château de la Muette, Paris, Friday 24th March 2000

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Knowledge is the only meaningful resource today.

Peter F Drucker, *Post-Capitalist Society*, 1993

The revolution that will shape the next century is in the transport of ideas and information...At the heart of the communications revolution lies something that will benefit humanity: global diffusion of knowledge. Information once available only to the few will be available to the many, instantly and inexpensively.

Frances Cairncross *The Death of Distance*, 1997

We need to create conditions that make it possible for individuals to get the power to experiment, to create, to develop, to test - to innovate. People at all levels can contribute to solving organizational problems, to inventing new methods or pieces of strategy.

Rosabeth Moss Canter, *The Change Masters*, 1983

Our institutional innovation has been incremental while our technological innovation has been radical

Charles Leadbeater, *Living on thin Air*, 1999.

These four quotations capture the essence of society's transition to a knowledge economy and its consequences for educational systems, and schools in particular.

Much of the knowledge and skill that students have traditionally acquired during their years of schooling will continue to be required. Literacy and numeracy and IT literacy will remain at the core of schooling at the primary level, and secondary education will be expected to transmit much of the conventional subject curriculum, since parents will demand it and politicians will respect these wishes. At the same time, it will become increasingly clear that the changing patterns of work, as well as domestic and social life, will demand new forms of knowledge and skill which the changing school will be expected to cultivate in students. Among these will be:

- meta-cognitive abilities and skills - thinking about how to think and learning how to learn
- the ability to integrate formal and informal learning, declarative knowledge (or *knowing that*) and procedural knowledge (or *know-how*)
- the ability to access, select and evaluate knowledge in an information-soaked world
- the ability to develop and apply several forms of intelligence as suggested by Howard Gardner and others
- the ability to work and learn effectively and in teams
- the ability to create, transpose and transfer knowledge
- the ability to cope with ambiguous situations, unpredictable problems and unforeseeable circumstances
- the ability to cope with multiple careers - learning how to 're-design' oneself, locate oneself in a job market, choose and fashion the relevant education and training.

The school we have inherited is largely a creature of the industrial revolution and was in many ways designed to socialise the young for life in a society, dominated by manufacturing industries and manual labour. It is not well designed to socialise the young in the values and skills – and to assess and record such achievements - yet they will be of crucial importance to the success of knowledge economies.

An effective education system in the knowledge economy will, I believe, need to:

- train all education leaders in knowledge management
- create R&D alliances between universities and schools to generate the new professional knowledge that is needed
- learn how to transfer professional knowledge and skill rapidly within and between educational institutions
- establish dense networks of teachers and schools to support knowledge creation and transfer.

Just as in the industrial age schools mirrored life in factories, schools in knowledge economies will need to become more life emergent workplaces and

teachers will need to model the knowledge and skills of effective citizens of such a society. This will be a change of formidable size and scope.

In recent years I have asked many school principals this simple question:

*How many years of professional experience are there among your teaching staff?
Give your answer in centuries and decades.*

The principal of a typical secondary school admits to having several centuries of professional experience at the potential disposal of the staff. But when asked the follow-up question:

How much of this knowledge is shared by all the teachers

Estimates fall between five and fifteen per cent. Most of the professional knowledge of teachers is acquired through trial and error learning alone in the isolated classroom and so locked into their individual heads. In the knowledge economy business firms cannot afford to be so casual about their knowledge and have created knowledge managers to help employees share and exploit their collective knowledge. Schools and colleges must learn to do so too. This means recognising knowledge gaps and learning how to reduce them – both the gap between what the staff of a school know and what their school needs to know and also the gap between what they need to know and their awareness of how to gain access to that knowledge.

Managing knowledge for educational institutions means learning how to transfer knowledge within and between those institutions. Part of the problem is that much of the knowledge is tacit, and cannot easily be articulated into words for transfer by written word or by word of mouth. The most effective ways of transferring the professional knowledge of teachers is probably through face-to-face interaction and by joint working on improving their teaching. Knowledge management thus has huge implications for how educational research and development and the continuing professional development of teachers are organised. Radical innovation may be needed in the next decade.

If knowledge economies are to be successful, they need a high quality educational system more than ever before. Understanding and improving knowledge management within educational systems is thus of the highest priority. The book *Knowledge Management in the Learning Society* is designed to clarify the relevant questions, frame and agenda for debate and lead the way to some of the answers.