

The Third Teacher: from classrooms to learning ecologies pt 2

John Muskovits' investigation of the effect of learning environments

In the first part of this article in the last issue of *Education Today* I explored the premise that redesigned and purpose built spaces provide the capacity to extend and enhance pedagogical repertoires and therefore enhance student engagement and performance. I argued that to do this we need to de-privatising the classrooms and de-institutionalising education. We need to foster meeting places of architecture and education and challenging assumptions and developing a new narrative of learning ecology of space. In this narrative the psychology of space was explored as was the role that technology could play within that space.

In this issue I will explore how Mount St Benedict College has taken small steps in the area of flexible learning spaces. Through the lenses of Dr Kenn Fisher's Pedagogical Maps and the voices of our students and expertise of our teachers we are attempting to bring to life this learning ecology of space into practice.

Designing space through Pedagogical Maps

Dr Kenn Fisher from Rubida Research (2007 p.17)¹ links pedagogy to space through a number of pedagogical lenses.

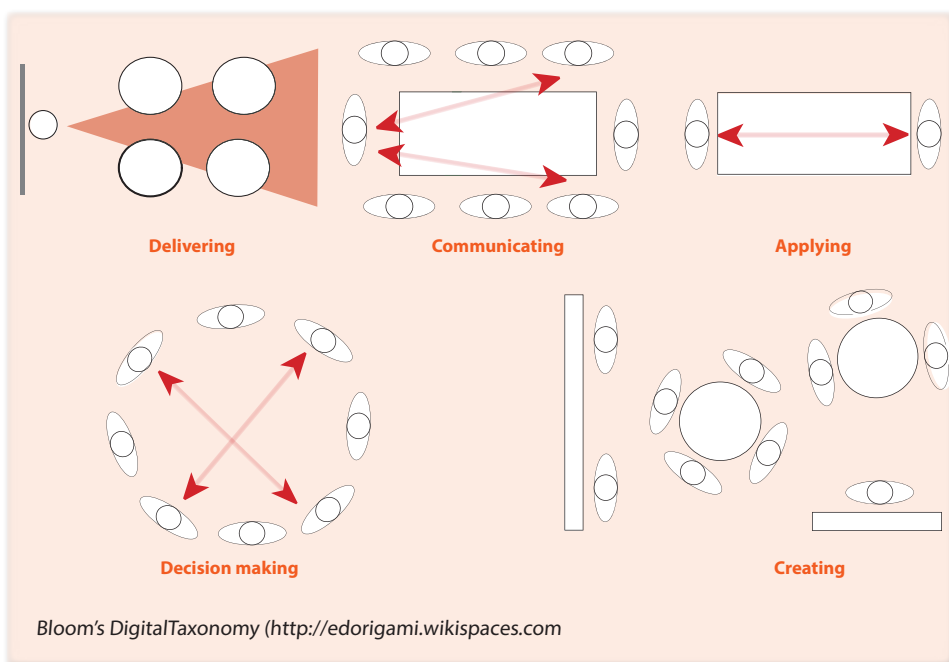
- Delivering with instructor based passive learning
- Applying with one to one, informal and active learning
- Creating with multi-disciplinary, research based and equalitarian learning
- Communicating with organising information
- Decision-Making with information sharing, decision based learning.

Fisher uses the work of Scott Webber (2004) to correspondingly translate these flexible learning transitions into how they might look like in the physical space. I have reshaped it above right to roughly complement Blooms Digital taxonomy.

(see <http://edorigami.wikispaces.com/Bloom's+Digital+Taxonomy>)

Trying to put the framework into a reality

Life is lived on the field and not in the grandstands. However, at times it is in the grandstands where we can improve our play. And so it was fortuitous that Stephen Harris,



who captured my imagination two years ago, did so just before our Leadership Planning weekend. The seeds of his thinking became the catalyst for my swiftly prepared, but detailed, research submission. I argued that we needed to modify our new GLA building plan, which was to be built in the back half of the year and opened in early 2012. As school architecture faithfully and accurately tells a story of what the school values and holds true in learning at the time of construction, I wanted to ensure that this new building spoke of a new vision and a new practice that was future proofed, bold, experimental and creative, personalised and inclusive, inherently flexible and equalitarian in approach.

Time was of the essence. After a series of meetings, deliberations and discussions with senior and middle managers, teachers and students and finally the architects, we were on our way. It was not easy, but often the things we most value never are. Invitations were offered to non- practical faculties to use the space for flexibility, creativity and experimentation. Three took up the challenge; PDHPE; Religious Education; and English.

Support came from the College's Professional Learning Coordinator, Mrs Sharon McGowan,

the AIS, school visits, release time for planning and programing, and literature provided by yours truly. As the year evolved, so did the pedagogy and the use of the space. Throughout the year we also showcased best practice learning activities from the faculties in teachers' meeting which facilitated robust debate on the relationship between space and pedagogy.

Thank you to the College Board and the College Principal, Mrs Maria Pearson, for having the courage to listen and the foresight to act.

Our new building opened in early 2012. Here is a sample of student comments using the room:

"it's very modern and allows you to learn in a way that suits you"

"I like the interior design, I also like how its really good for group work, as you can just move everything around"

"There is lots of natural light. The technology is very good"

"I like learning in this space because the hallways are never blocked up with numerous amounts of people"

"It feels a little like home because you can lie down if you need to or sit back on a lounge. I actually find it easier to learn because I am very comfortable in the room"

"I feel that the equipment, tables and chairs

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Year 7 Religious Education learning grid: traditions of MSB							
Knowledge	Learning						
		Remember	Understand	Apply	Analyse	Evaluate	Create
	Information (factual)	Outcome 1 Values and College History 1 Fact file	Outcome 3 Good Samaritan sisters 1	Parable 3 Great Commandment		Values and College history 8 College Crest	Values and College history 10 Word search
		Outcome 2 St Benedict 1	Parable 1 The Parable	Good Samaritan Sisters 4 Good Samaritan History	Parable 5 The people in the Parable		
	Ideas (concepts)	Values and College history 2 College prayer and song	St Benedict 4 Who is Benedict?	Values and College history 4 College values	Parable 6 Tetris quiz	St Benedict 8 The impact of St Benedict	Parable 9 Photo story
		St Benedict 2 Cloze Passage	Values and College History The Land of the Dharug People	Good Samaritan Sisters 5 Visit to the chapel	St Benedict 7 His presence in our college	Parable 8 The message of the Parable	Good Samaritan sisters 10 House Brochure
	Process (procedural)	St Benedict 3 Profile Biography	St Benedict 5 The Life of St Benedict	St Benedict 6 Web quest	Values and college history 5 Harry Potter Activity	Good Samaritan Sisters 8 House Patrons	St Benedict 9 Cartoon
		Good Samaritan Sisters 2 House Table	Good Samaritan Sisters 3 Good Samaritan Communities	Good Samaritan sisters 6 Power Point	Values and college history 6 Values in the MSB Community		
	Reflection (meta-cognitive)	Parable 2	Reflection and analysis of Learning Process	Parable 4 Group activity Role play	Values and college history 7 Reflection for future Year 7 students	Good Samaritan Sisters 9	Parable 10 Modern version of Parable Movie Maker
				Good Samaritan Sisters 7 Legacy Letter	Parable 7 Good Samaritan Web Quest	Values and College history 9 Why send your daughter to MSB	St Benedict 10 Bookmark and Prayer

can be moved around to create a more flexible learning space. “

“It helps us to learn how to be independent”

“It feels like a relaxed environment where everyone can collaborate ideas. It is a laid back, stress free area. Lounges are comfortable”

“I like having the walls that you can write on. Being able to open the walls and make the three rooms into a larger room is really good”

“I like that the furniture can be rearranged to suit our learning needs eg in groups, individual work or working as a class”

“It’s contemporary, innovative, comfortable, light and open and it’s not traditional in the sense that it adapts to various learning styles”

So how did the three faculties use the rooms?

The Religion faculty, under the leadership of The Head of Religion Mrs Donna Dempsey, developed an integrated and self-directed, open work for Year 7 with lots of choice and using

the Digital Blooms taxonomy to help augment the space (see adjacent).

The English faculty experimented with Team Teaching and various modes of delivery which complemented the space.

PDHPE under the leadership of Mr David Campbell, Head of PDHPE developed a common language for students [1 on 1, Team Huddle, Grandstand, Locker Room, and Area] where learning spaces reflected the pedagogical transition from one mode of delivery to another in lessons using Dr Kenn Fisher’s framework above within a project based learning approach.

A very good example of this approach was on the last day of school in period 6 with three Year 9 classes in a one large space. The lesson was the culmination of four lessons of work on a Year 9 Exhibition Project – *How can local recreational facilities support lifelong physical activity?*

The task had two parts:

Part A – You will need to complete an analysis of existing services and facilities in your local area and will also need to identify the needs of your community. This may involve and not limited to the use of tables, surveys, reports, internet research etc.

Part B – Using the research collated from Part A, you will then design a brand new facility that will ideally compensate and cater for any needs that current local recreational facilities have not been able to meet

The girls’ products and processes were on display and being assessed by a variety of people such as Dana Spencer, Hornsby Council, Parks, Asset Coordinator, a parent representative, the College’s Registrar, Sports Coordinator, Gifted and Talented Coordinator and myself to name a few.

Well what do you imagine happened? Chaos? Students off task? Behavioural

problems? Actually quite the opposite! As we walked around the room assessing the 20 or so presentations with a student-developed rubric, I was initially surprised in how engaged the girls were as they discussed and debated, reasoned and outlined their proposals to the guests. On show was the very best of learning: real life, relevant, understanding and creating [one student even developed an app] and assessment that was formative and summative. I was proud of the girls and the PDHPE Department as I saw first-hand how enquiry based pedagogy, if properly resourced, and supported effectively by space and technology can translate into powerful learning.

The afternoon resonated with a recent blog of Bianca Hewes (2010) I read which said that a big part of PBL is risk-taking. "Teachers feel comfortable standing at the front of the room referring to a textbook and handout and that it is hard for students to 'un-learn' an approach

"The most I ever taught without teaching"; "I was constantly asking different groups difficult questions to help them develop"; "The flexible spaces gave the girls choices in their learning"

Christina Liu

PDHPE New Scheme teacher

to learning for one class, only to 're-learn' it in another".² The blog highlighted a systemic challenge for schools to develop a common language and practice in pedagogy.

Not wishing to lose the momentum gained from our new building under the leadership of the Professional Learning Coordinator, Mrs Sharon McGowan, we conducted a number of student and staff surveys and forums and discussion with parents to develop a blueprint entitled 'Flexible learning in flexible spaces: where to next in 2013?' which I presented to the Leadership Team. One key aspect of the plan was

for the Principal to develop a Position Statement on learning spaces for the College community. Another was for me to meet with all the other non-practical Heads of Department and ask them to elaborate on the types of pedagogy they use to enhance learning and how space could support them in their teaching.

One such Head, the Head of Languages, Mrs Belinda Jack, said her faculty liked starting with didactic instruction, presenting words/concepts to students, with an emphasis on students speaking and announcing out loud, then using drama to consolidate learning

Topic question: How can local recreational facilities support lifelong physical activity

Task description:

You have been selected to assist the Hornsby Shire Council in promoting and encouraging lifelong physical activity. You will be working in teams of no more than four people, whereby you will be required to present a proposal that promotes the use of local recreational facilities as a means of participating in lifelong physical activity. There are two parts to the project:

Part A – You will need to complete an analysis of existing services and facilities in your local area and will also need to identify the needs of your community. This may involve and not limited to the use of tables, surveys, reports, internet research etc.

Part B – Using the research collated from Part A, you will then design a brand new facility that will ideally compensate and cater for any needs that current local recreational facilities have not been able to meet. This can be presented in a variety

of forms such as drawing plans, posters, 3D models, computer graphics etc.

It is also encouraged that after you have designed your new facility that you promote and advertise it through the use of appropriate multimedia (e.g. posters, brochures, pamphlets, TV ads, radio, internet advertisement etc.)

Your proposal will be presented in the form of an exhibition which will be evaluated by relevant stakeholders e.g. teaching staff, council representatives, recreational officers, parents etc. Your exhibition must include:

- Analysis of local recreational services and facilities
- Analysis of the needs of the community of all ages (lifelong physical activity)
- Development proposal for a new recreational facility
- Promotional campaign and strategies that promote the new facility

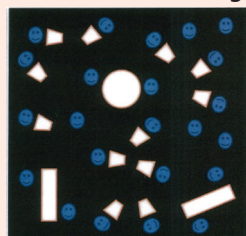
Your exhibition will be evaluated with the following criteria:

- Analysis of current local recreational facilities is thorough and accurate
- Analysis of community needs is extensive and represents people of all ages
- Proposed facility addresses the needs of the community and can support lifelong physical activity
- Promotion campaign is creatively designed and utilises a variety of media and strategies to strategically connect with a targeted audience
- Exhibition is professionally presented and thorough

Project length

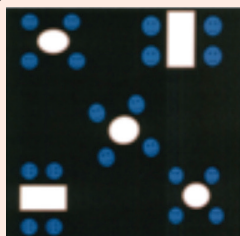
You will be given 4–5 lessons to work on your exhibitions and will spend the last lesson presenting it to fellow classmates and relevant stakeholders.

PDHPE Common Language



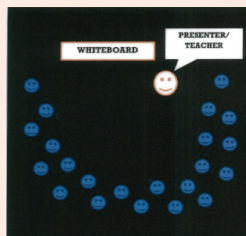
One on one

- Partner work
- Small working area where both students communicate effectively



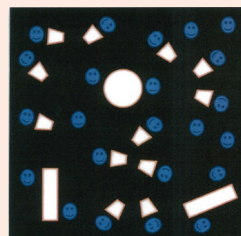
Team huddle

- Working in small groups where all members can see and hear each other
- Share ideas and work towards a common goal
- Involves effective communication (taking and listening)



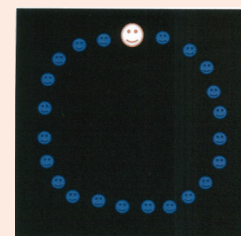
Grandstand

- Horseshoe or u shape formation
- Audience focuses attention on a presenter or the teacher. They listen to what they are trying to say.
- Only one voice at a time



Locker room

- Find your own space in the classroom where you can focus on your own work and not be distracted by others
- Individual and independent learning
- Quiet and reflective work



Arena

- Circular formation
- Everyone needs to be visible
- Suitable for debates class discussions etc
- Listening skills is very important only one voice at a time

Professional learning

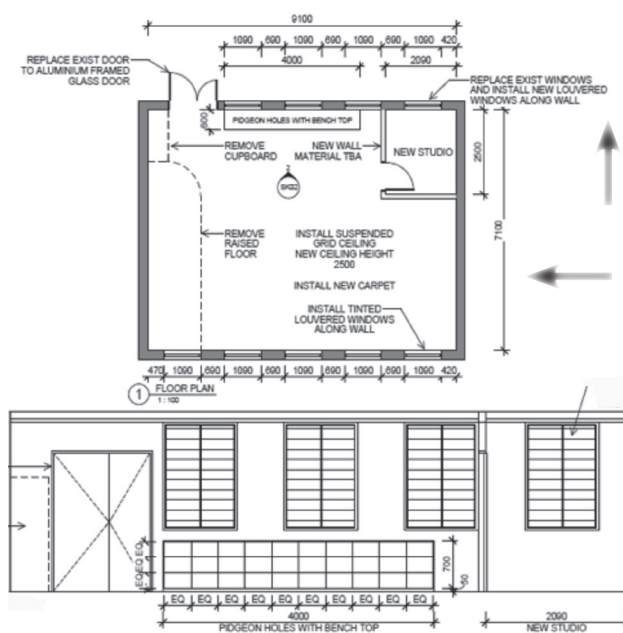
Shadowing a teacher in a high performing school for languages focusing especially on innovative pedagogy e.g. using play to teach language.

School visit to explore how schools best utilise video conferencing in languages.

Reading research into how other schools effectively use flexible learning spaces in languages.

Exploration of how to effectively incorporate cooperative and enquiry based learning into languages.

Provision of programming time to develop units of work that reflect a change of pedagogy or application of this pedagogy in the new learning space.



Install 1 Stand-alone camera/ flat screen for Skype and Video conferencing capabilities speaking tests; listening exams; group work – including listening; extension work.

Purchase double desks on wheels that are rectangular and easy to stack, for Role Play/Drama. Purchase zabuton Japanese floor cushions and low table in back right hand corner.

High visibility and ventilation with see through louvres

Install split system/free standing air conditioning
Install low shelving with bench top and lockable cupboards underneath along left hand side wall.

“Really interesting projects... [the girls] made an effort to come up with innovative solutions”

“...in some ways the girls ideas reflected what we are learning about community.” “Thoroughly enjoyed it [assessing the projects]”

Dana Spencer

Hornsby Council, Parks, Asset Co-ordinator

through role plays and games. Belinda said she saw a potential for video conferencing. As a way forward I asked Belinda to go back to her faculty and discuss how space could support this type of learning and what type of support they might need? As a discussion starter I suggested a Skype bar could be engaging for the girls and having the Head of Department visit a school to explore how schools best utilise video conferencing and perhaps a faculty member could shadow a teacher in a high performing school focusing especially on innovative pedagogy e.g. using play to teach language.

In between this time I was meeting separately with the Principal, Business Manager, ICT Manager, IRC Coordinator and Head of Languages to problem solve on how to finance the project. Soon I had my list from the faculty and they seemed energised by the direction the project was going. Next I organised a lunchtime meeting with both Drama and Language students and teachers to further refine the ideas. Eventually the brief was taken to the architect with an in principle agreement to proceed and to have plans and a costing drawn up. The process echoed Lippincott (2009) who says a “faculty who [is] genuinely engaged in pedagogy, along with others who are concerned with the teaching and learning aspects of the space, should play a central, not peripheral, role in planning”³

I was determined to transform the vision of technology I share at parent information sessions of ‘not only reading about the rainforest but talking to people in the rainforest’ into a reality. This vision resonated with Richard Ford’s (2012), Director of Teaching and Learning at St Andrews Cathedral, thinking. “It is no longer enough to be a school where students get to see the world through overseas trips... and meet the world as visitors around the world visit the school. Schools now need to be places where students learn with the world”⁴ It is a work in progress but we are heading in the right direction.

At the time of writing the College is going to stage the refurbishment of the Language Centre.

A word on Change

The implementation of a new building, engaging stakeholders in the vision, adopting flexible furniture, leading and managing faculties to embrace the ecology of space this year has not been easy. What has made it easier is that my journey has been based on sound research on the change process. Edgar Schein (1993 p.88) has taught me that “change managers must make disconfirming data available [and] highly visible to all members of the organisation, and such data must be convincing”⁵ William Bridges (2003 p.106) helped me consider developing a

new mindset which requires “a very significant transition: old assumptions and expectations have to be relinquished, and a long, difficult journey made”⁶ John Kotter’s complacency and false urgency and his eight stage change process have been useful as has Peter Senge’s iconic work *The 5th Discipline*. The work of Otto Scharmer and the ability to move through a U process as a team, an organisation, or a system, using the social Technology of Presencing was new to me but helped frame a human dimension to the change process.

(http://c.ymcdn.com/sites/www.solonline.org/resource/resmgr/ecw/theory_u_exec_summary.pdf)

Food for the journey

I am indebted to the generosity of many people who helped in my school visits to provide deep conversations about space and pedagogy. To these like-minded travellers, I am grateful that they have shared their wisdom and enabled me to lead others so that our students may be better engaged and better prepared for the world which awaits them (see Appendix).

Conclusion

Lee Crockett (2012) challenges teachers to act today. He asserts the question is not “Can I change education?”⁷ But rather, “Can I do anything in my classrooms to prepare students for their future?”

It is in this spirit, that I have argued that we need to de-privatise our classrooms and de-institutionalise our schools. To do this we need to develop meeting places of architecture and education, where design and practice speak to each and where we can challenge assumptions and develop a new narrative. Gaining a better

understanding of the relationship between psychology and space, and space and technology is also essential if we are to deepen our practice.

I have also argued that flexible learning supported by flexible, re-designed and purpose built spaces do make a difference and 'provides the capacity to extend and enhance our pedagogical repertoires' and thereby enhance student engagement and performance.

The paper has built a philosophical framework and then endeavoured to put this into practice at Mount St Benedict College, Pennant Hills. And while small steps have been taken, with food for the journey and an understanding of the change process, there is an exciting journey ahead. The mission is still 'to explore strange new worlds, to seek out new life and new civilizations, and to boldly go where no man has gone before'. [How times have changed where we can split infinitives!] Through the new learning ecology of space the true nature and identity of the child's 'third' teacher the environment can now fully emerge. What a wonderful way to welcome our students into the 21st Century as global citizens. **ET**

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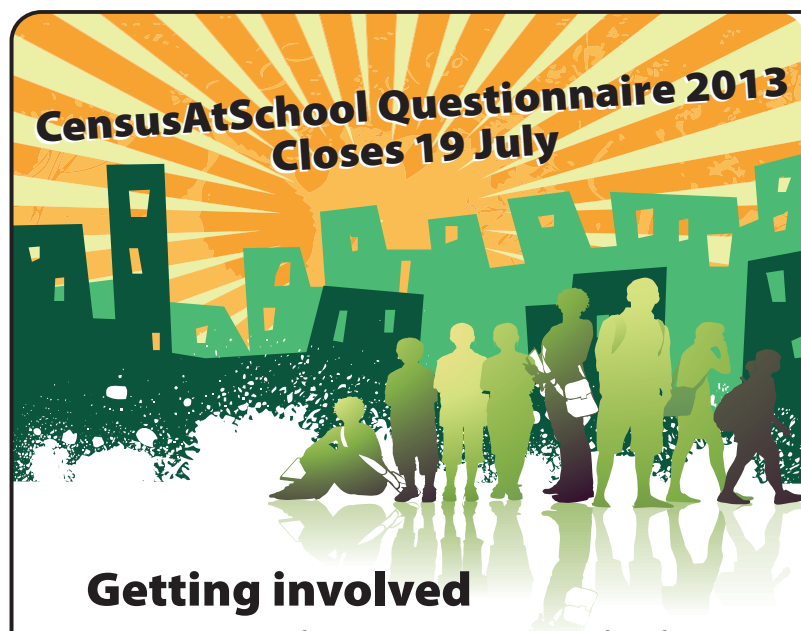
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- Appendix 1 Food for the Journey**
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 - Blair Athol, Adelaide (2012) "Reggio learning and the sense of welcome, connection inside and out, the piazza and the use of space, colour and light"
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 - Redford College, Canberra (2012) "close proximity of wet areas such as kitchenette to classrooms"
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*Heard at a Conference



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