



Australian College of Educators Queensland Branch  
**Celebrating the First 50 Years**  
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The Australian College of Educators Queensland Branch  
50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary and Medal Oration

**Continuity and Change in Australian Education: Estranged  
Companions?**

**Professor Neil Dempster FACE**

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*The Queensland Chapter was formed on the 15th July 1960  
at a meeting at the University of Queensland.*

*The Queensland Branch conducted its 50th Year Celebrations on the 15th July 2010  
at venues throughout Queensland.*

*This oration was presented by Professor Neil Dempster FACE on the 15 July 2010, precisely  
50 years from the date when the Queensland Branch was officially formed.*

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**Introduction**

The title of this 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Oration - *Continuity and Change in Australian Education: Estranged Companions?* - came to me a few months ago in the contretemps between Governments and Unions over this year's administration of the National Assessment Program in Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN). National testing is one of a myriad of changes that have appeared on the educational landscape since the 1960s. In fact, not a year seems to have gone by when there has not been another significant addition to the educational policy agenda or a major shift in contemporary programs. This state of constant flux began as a trickle in the sixties but that trickle has been growing, I argue, from the time the Australian College of Education Queensland Chapter was formed. Indeed in the last fifty years, the pace of change has continued to accelerate as many a commentator has predicted it would. While change now appears ubiquitous, its effects endemic and its newsworthiness unquestioned, continuity does not experience anywhere near the level of media attention given to change. Matters of reform in education are hegemonic, dominating debate, discussion and discourse. Issues of continuing importance in education which I call 'continuities' for short, are hidden, infrequently debated and rarely the subject of press reports. This seeming dominance of change over continuity is at the heart of my question: Are they now somewhat 'estranged companions'? What are some of the issues of importance, the 'continuities' necessary in education and how have they been acknowledged when change has come along? To answer this question, I recount five stories, one for each of the last five decades – stories, which the license available in an Anniversary Oration, enable me to draw out lessons about continuity and change in Australian education.

## The Sixties

The decade of the sixties saw a real surge of interest in education, partly brought on by the swelling ranks of primary and secondary school students resulting from the post World War 'baby boom' and certainly spurred on by the launching of the Russian Sputnik in the late fifties. This latter event fostered national feelings of failure in the cold war competition between Russia and America resulting in a plethora of educational activity by the United States and a spill-over effect on other Western Democracies. Schools, teachers and kids it was claimed, needed to improve, particularly in mathematics and science, if the West, and the USA in particular, was to regain its 'rightful place' in the world.

It was against this backdrop that I began my teaching career. By 1967 I was in my third year, teaching in a small 'spot on the road' (pub, general store and village hall) in a cane farming area north of Bundaberg.

One Monday morning early in the year, I was informed by Jack, the Head Teacher (the title Principal had not yet entered school leadership vocabulary), that the Inspector had rung to request my attendance at a Friday half-day seminar on the New Maths for 'infants' (so called were Grade One and Two students in those days). Jack said that this was a first. He had never had to release a teacher from duties for a seminar before. In those days, requests were as good as commands, so since there were only two of us at the school, Jack had to take over my 36 'littlies' at 'big lunch' on that Friday and I drove the thirty-five miles to Bundaberg in my seen-better-days pastel green 1949 Vanguard Spacemaster sedan. This was the first time I had left my class during school time in my short teaching career. Quite justifiably, I was excited and enthusiastic about what I would encounter. I arrived at the North Bundaberg Primary School, the venue for the seminar, at one forty-five, obviously late and complaining inwardly that the Department was unreasonable to expect me to drive thirty odd miles, some on gravel roads in my lunch hour and still be on time. The consequence of my lateness was that I had to sit on a form at the back of the group of teachers and officials gathered under the school building. I had neither a clear view of the Inspector who was lecturing nor of the charts he had arranged on a blackboard easel. Once I had settled, I nudged the middle aged lady next to me and asked her if I had missed much. I can still remember her reply.

**"No, not much," she said. "This bloke's just here to wave a flag. Inspectors don't know much about teaching infants."**

She was right. When I arrived back at school on Monday morning, Jack said,

**"OK, what did they tell you to do about this New Maths for your little 'ankle biters'?"**

I had to confess that although the Inspector spoke non-stop for two hours about 'curriculum scope and sequence', 'Piagetian Stages' and the use of 'concrete materials' preceding the acquisition of abstract 'algorithms', I was little the wiser about what either Jack or I should be doing about them. After all, I had three grades and with my dozen little Grade Threes, I was only just getting on to the one column addition 'sums' Jack had set out for me in my Workbook for the second six-week period of Term One. The Inspector's claim that I had a responsibility to plan a Current Curriculum Program (he called it a CCP), was totally foreign to me. In fact, my colleagues and I at the seminar joked that the initials, CCP, reminded us of the letters on the Russian rocket we had seen on TV carrying the Sputnik astronauts into space.

**"Didn't they give you anything to bring back with you?" Jack asked.**

I replied in the negative, repeating the Inspector's apology for the unavailability of the new Syllabus or the Cuisenaire Rods to support it, due to "delays outside the Department's control".

**Jack was very sympathetic saying, "Don't worry Neilo. We'll just keep doing what we always do. In the meantime, if we don't ask, we won't be told. We'll just wait until 'His Nibs' comes round next year."**

What lessons do we take from this? We now know that developing curriculum guidelines or syllabuses – even National ones – and talking about them is the easy part of the change process. Planning, preparing and accomplishing effective curriculum implementation in school systems is the hard part. And hardest of all is the management of the necessary ongoing professional development to ensure that new content, new teaching strategies, new resources and new assessment processes are understood by teachers and school leaders. Indeed over two decades ago, after a comprehensive study of the Professional Development Program for the Australian Schools Commission, Bob Andrews (1988) recorded the key features of the most beneficial programs in the eyes of the profession. These key features continue to be essential in effective professional development:

- advanced planning and organisation
- effective leadership
- a commitment to managing change
- a supportive organisational climate
- a direct relationship with school needs
- ownership by the participants
- teacher self-confidence and self-worth as themes
- involvement of the whole school community
- external support
- a spaced approach to delivery
- the provision of time for reflection
- access to evidence and a resource network
- close monitoring and systematic evaluation

What we also know is that delivery of edicts from those in high places ignores the critical role professional practitioners play in implementation. Adaptations will occur and many of these will be much more in tune with children's needs, interests and abilities and local circumstances than policy writers can envisage. Capitalising on the professional acumen of teachers as they search for innovations in teaching is known to improve the corpus of knowledge about what works and what doesn't for any new initiative. In short, 'top down' and 'bottom up' approaches to policy implementation are essential. That said, there is far more fanfare given to what the policy makers intend than what helps teachers make the links from what they have been doing to what they will be required to do when new policies or curriculum documents are put out into school systems. The pattern I saw in my first seminar seems to be the default pattern, particularly when governments bent on meeting political agendas doggedly stick to pronouncements about intended change as a proxy for real change at the 'grass roots'. Real change relies on teacher 'buy in' and this does not occur without a commitment to shared leadership.

## **The Seventies**

The seventies began but three years after the referendum which resulted in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders being granted Australian citizenship. The seventies saw the sixties' surge in interest in education taken to an even higher level of activity with the election of the Whitlam Government in 1972 and the introduction of Special Purpose Programs such as those for Disadvantaged Schools, Geographically Isolated Children, and Educational Innovations.

In the mid-seventies I travelled with an Inspector and another Advisory Teacher to the far north of Queensland to a place called Doomadgee. The trip was funded under the Special Purpose Program for Professional Development which in Queensland, was managed by a cross sectoral committee called the Queensland Inter-systemic In-service Education Committee (QINSEC). The Doomadgee School had recently been taken over by the Department of Education from the Church which had run an Aboriginal mission there for many years. We were flying North to introduce teachers to new 'Curriculum Guides' for English, Social Studies and Science. Unfortunately, when the 'hard bitten' old pilot weighed us three passengers and our baggage, we were shown to be grossly overweight for the light aircraft in which we would be travelling from Mt Isa. So the pilot said,

**"It's either one of you stays behind or you get rid of some of those boxes of books."**

As a consequence, we left the new syllabuses or Curriculum Guides and supporting materials in a Mount Isa airport shed. Given my first experience of in-service education almost a decade earlier, the irony was not lost on me. However, to say that we were made to feel welcome at the school and in the community on our arrival was an understatement. As visitors we were feted, and after school there was a community gathering in the local hall with Aboriginal children singing and dancing followed by supper with hot chocolate or tea. When I went to put some sugar in my tea, I couldn't find a teaspoon, so had to tip some into my cup from the jam-tin-sized sugar pot. There were some green twigs on the table and these acted as 'stirrers' very well. Needless to say, an enjoyable time was had by all.

The next morning, I was up early and went down to the banks of the Nicholson River where I watched an Aboriginal man fishing. He was using a hand reel, twirling the line many times in the air to get up speed before flinging it into the river near some snags. As he did so, there was a shiny flash as the sun glinted on the silver lure he was using. Sure enough, after a couple of casts he hooked a good sized Barramundi. I walked over to him and chatted as I always do to any fishermen I meet, about his gear, his bait, his lures and his tactics. I asked him about his shiny lure which I had not yet seen up close. He proudly pulled it in to the bank again and said,

**"This here's a spoon lure."**

**I said, "Can I have a look at it please?"**

He was happy to pass it over, explaining that it was just a silver teaspoon which he had flattened and drilled two holes in – one at the tip of the blade of the spoon, the other in the end of the handle. To these he had attached a treble gang hook and a sturdy nylon line respectively - perfect for Barramundi.

**I asked him, "Are these common round here?"**

He replied, **“Oh yeah, everybody’s got ‘em.”**

And then I couldn’t help saying, **“Ah that’s why we had green sticks to stir our tea at the community hall last night.”**

To this he grumbled with a grin, **“Yeah! But better to have fish on the table than a silver spoon!”**

What is the essential knowledge about education and change in this account? First, the values shown by the fisherman are age old, masking a quiet dignity not only in matters as practical as food provision but also in turning Western ways to Indigenous ends. Second, the ignorance of three Departmental employees about Aboriginal culture is notable because their assumption that the introduction of new syllabuses could proceed as if the context did not matter was arrogant. Third, interventions such as the one we were imposing at Doomadgee are now known not to encourage sustained activity without the acknowledgement and involvement of local people and leadership by them in managing change. We know that action by insiders must take eventual precedence over action by outsiders if change is to be sustained. Cultural understanding is at the heart of this approach to change management because people act differently when they themselves identify where the ‘shoe is pinching’. This understanding is essential if change is eventually to have a chance for long lasting success. And if ever there was an area in Australian education where this kind of knowledge needs to be taken into account, it is in the leadership of learning by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. We are still such a long way from a ‘fair go’ for our first Australians that the fanfare accompanying imposed change, must be challenged every time it is trumpeted, no matter how laudatory the goals and expectations. As the Maori from across the Tasman put it, goals alone are not enough, ***Ma te huruhuru ka rere te manu – it is the feathers that enable the bird to fly.***

### **The Eighties**

The most significant feature of the decade of the eighties, I would argue, was initiated by the Quality of Education Review Committee (QERC) chaired by Professor Peter Karmel. A decade earlier he had been instrumental through the Karmel Committee’s Report, *Schools in Australia*, in influencing the then Whitlam Government to inject significant funds into schooling. The effect of a decade of input activity was challenged by the QERC which recommended a shift in focus to the outcomes of educational expenditure. The intent of the second Karmel Committee Review is still with us and dominates the thinking of politicians and policy makers to this day. An example of the shift put Literacy and Numeracy under the spotlight for the first time nationally, in a Hawke Government Special Purpose Program called *Basic Learning in Primary Schools* or BLIPS for short.

During its three year life, I shadowed the BLIPS Program as a university researcher from the Commonwealth Treasury through the Commonwealth Department into the then Queensland Department of Education and on into the State’s education regions. I was studying what happened to Commonwealth education policy in government education systems in the Australian federation and why it happened in the way it did.

I attended many meetings on the implementation of the BLIPS Program and at several of them I heard what became a familiar refrain. When asked what response would be made by the State Education Department to the requirements of the program in literacy and numeracy, it became very clear that the State agenda took precedence over the Commonwealth’s aspirations. I observed and noted at central office level, interactions between senior officers and program personnel such as the following on several occasions:

**“It’s important to remember that we know our schools better than Canberra does, so what we need to do in cases like this is to use a bit of creative writing (‘submissionese’ was a term I heard often) to say what they want to hear.”**

The intent of exchanges like this was to ensure that Commonwealth Government funds were employed, if at all possible, in Queensland’s interests. Accompanying this somewhat obstructive tone, I also frequently heard officials in Canberra referred to by Queensland officers as “Those bastards down there!” When I moved out into the regions, I heard similar talk, irrespective of geographic location. Taking centrally designed programs and adapting them to Queensland needs was an art form managed with what can only be described as subversive tactics. And so on it went throughout the State. Schools, Regions and Head Office personnel were immersed in a parochial organisational culture so pervasive that they quite deliberately employed, without pangs of conscience, the same tactics, whenever Commonwealth funds were on offer. It is no wonder that we now see the Commonwealth Government using rewards and punishments to try to ensure that its program intensions are met.

I recount these experiences because of the essential knowledge about Commonwealth - State relations they contain and for the unrelenting pressures we now see attached to student outcomes – pressures that were only just beginning to be felt during the eighties. It seemed to me then that the States were not taking the move to outcomes as seriously as the Commonwealth wanted. Two decades later, partnership agreements have been struck between the Australian Government, the States and Territories, over a range of matters in education, starting with literacy and numeracy but extending to early childhood, school buildings, trade training centres, computing technology and so on, but they are partnership agreements which appear to assume that parochialism is dead. My experience tell me that it isn’t, and that State sovereignty is the minefield through which Australia’s common interests in education have yet to travel safely. I suggest that we all watch the Commonwealth-States relations space when the matter of assessment of student learning outcomes from the National Curriculum is raised. While, I would argue that the most visible expression of the shift in the eighties from inputs to outputs is the drive for annual national testing in literacy and numeracy, State-based obstructive arguments about assessment in the key areas of the national curriculum will follow as sure as night follows day. Moreover, how assessment for learning is to be regarded in this process in the face of the inexorable drive for assessment of learning (the pressure for outcomes) is something to which educators will need to pay particular attention. Why? Because there is ample research evidence to show that there are perverse effects from high stakes assessment of learning. I say a little more about this in comments about the first decade of this century later.

## **The Nineties**

While the nineties saw major shifts in the funding of government and non-government schools and the beginnings of significant increases in enrolments in private schools, accompanied by the new term, ‘the residualisation of state education’, an unanticipated and decidedly debilitating change came into schooling around the world quite ‘out of the blue’.

The Dunblane Massacre was a multiple murder-suicide which occurred at Dunblane Primary School in a little Scottish town of the same name on 13 March 1996.

On that day, a 44 year old unemployed former shopkeeper and former Scout leader, walked into the school armed with two 9 millimeter Browning pistols and two Smith & Wesson .357 Magnum revolvers. All were held with approved licenses. He was carrying 743 cartridges, and fired his weapons 109 times. Sixteen children and one adult were killed before he committed suicide.

Security in schools, particularly primary schools, was tightened in response to the Dunblane Massacre, not only in Scotland but elsewhere in the United Kingdom, Australia and other parts of the world. In Australia they were dramatically tightened following the Port Arthur massacre for which Martin Bryant, the convicted killer, claimed he had been influenced by events at Dunblane.

I saw these tightened security conditions in early 1997 when I was on study leave in Glasgow working with Professor John MacBeath. We discussed the new measures being taken by Scottish schools to protect their children and teachers - school lockdowns, visitor monitoring, signing in and signing out and so on. I saw this too in operation in London where I visited several schools, one of which was a school in Hackney, a low SES area in the east of the city. It is composed of many different ethnic groups with a wide variety of language backgrounds. It has high unemployment (only two thirds of people over the age of 16 are in work) and as a consequence, there is high welfare dependence. The Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) for 2004 shows Hackney as the most deprived local authority in England. Its rate of crime is high - 141 criminal events per 1000 citizens per annum - the fifth worst in the country.

After I had completed all of the necessary security formalities at the school's office, I visited a Grade One classroom to talk with the teacher about the national curriculum for England and Wales, and to observe children at work. At one point I was on the floor watching a little fellow struggling with some magazines, scissors and a glue stick. I went over to him and sat down beside him asking,

**"What are you doing young fella?"**

His assertive reply was straight to the point,

**"Are you an 'orforised visitah'?"**

I said, **"Yes,"** showing him my badge and name.

**"Well, that's orlright then, I can talk to yuh."**

After asking him his name, I asked him what he had been asked to do. To this he replied,

**"I've gotta find free fings in vese books what start wif Kuh."**

**"How are you going,"** I asked.

**"Only got one,"** he said, **"cat,"** showing me a picture of a tabby he had cut out from a cat food ad.

I said, **"Let's look for some more pictures and I'll see if I can help you."**

After turning a few pages, we came upon a Coca Cola advertisement. I stopped and the pause was enough to give it away. He looked at me delightedly and said,

**"Yeah, Coca Cola. Vat's me ovver two. Fanks Mister!"** he almost shouted as he attacked the page enthusiastically with his scissors.

And away he went to find his teacher as 'happy as Larry', his three words with 'Kuh' complete.

I recount this story because in the face of a much more visibly hostile world than was evident but a few decades earlier, a world provoking growth in security measures, in child protection legislation and in risk management, kids still unconsciously and spontaneously get on with their lives, enjoying the moment, focusing on the here and now, engaging in interactions around them, planned and unplanned and reveling in the immediate satisfactions of learning something new. This should be part and parcel of childhood and growing up.

My story also suggests that it is still possible to have serendipity and magic in the Classroom. *Learning in captivity*, as John MacBeath calls much of school experience, does not have to mean learning with drudgery, high-handed routine and surveillance. The best of our teachers know and understand the need for young people to experience in schools some of the freedoms encountered when they are *learning in the wild*. Understanding the way young people learn rests on some well grounded accumulated research knowledge. I summarise some of this as 'ten lessons learned'.

#### **10 Lesson Learned (with apologies for a few changes to John MacBeath, 2009 p17)**

1. In the critical months before birth we build the architecture of our brains but with highly variable success.
2. Following birth the social, emotional and intellectual environment channels our genetic and congenital predispositions in nurturing or inhibiting ways.

3. The quality and range of and sensitivity to language plays a critical differentiating role in and out of school.
4. A rich oral language environment, enjoyable shared family experiences and realistic aspirational support are essential ingredients for children as they move towards the independence of adulthood.
5. The differential nature of experience creates a gap between high and low achievers well before children start school.
6. School experience may act to reinforce and even exacerbate the achievement and attitudinal gap because of the structure, attitudes and expectations which the school employs.
7. Learning is both individual and social – but fundamentally it is built on supportive relationships with parents, peers, teachers and significant other adults.
8. Learning is nourished through the satisfaction of achievement – the pursuit of a *personal best* is far more influential for a struggling child than an unreachable mandatory standard.
9. Our innate disposition to making meaning through narratives places an onus on adults, in school and at home, to help children and young people achieve personal understanding.
10. As young people and adults, the child in us lives on enabling adults to make connections with children and young people during their growth and development.

### **The ‘Noughties’**

The first decade of the twenty-first century has seen a continuation of accelerated change in Australian education, particularly at national level. I have already mentioned some of these changes but two examples which stand out are the National Curriculum and the MySchool Website. Furthermore, Governments of both political persuasions in Australia have ‘upped the ante’ when it comes to further centralising education through national initiatives. Some of what they have done has begun to narrow the curriculum at a time when education researchers are able to show that opening up horizons and opportunities for learners is what this century will need. Our own Melbourne Declaration of Goals for Australian Education draws attention to the diverse set of capabilities which should enrich the lives of children growing up Down Under. The following clusters of words describe the hopes we have for young people and illustrate the claim that school education should be focussed on matters of continuing importance to our society.

We want our young people to be:

creative, innovative and resourceful;

confident, active, healthy and informed;

honest, resilient, empathetic, respectful and collaborative;

enterprising, able to embrace opportunities, take initiatives and solve problems; and

able to value themselves and others and accept responsibility as active citizens.

No one would dispute that these hopes capture many of the matters of importance to which educators need to give undivided attention in the here and now as well as in the years to come.

Notwithstanding the significance of this broad educational agenda, from my point of view as an education researcher, the ‘noughties’ has been the decade of multiple meta-analytical research studies resulting in syntheses of findings about teaching, learning and leadership. Synthesis is one of the higher-order thinking skills and I illustrate it with an experience I had when I attended a seminar conducted recently by a visiting researcher with interests in literacy.

He recounted the following tale about an eight year old boy who was asked to write about what he knew of the body. The story shows clearly that even a young person of these tender years has the capacity to employ the most sophisticated of our higher- order thinking skills.

Allow me to read you what he wrote.

### **The Body**

**The body is made up of three parts – the brain, the borax and the alimentary canal.**

**The brain holds the brains.**

**The borax holds the lungs and a lot of other living things.**

**The alimentary canal holds the bowels – a, e, i, o and u.**

Now I'll admit that the story is a bit of a 'tall tale' but it shows that a young boy, attempting to show what he knows by synthesising all that he has heard about the body into a believable explanation, can get it wrong. Education researchers, however, have the findings from multiple studies to listen to, and they have been listening for a long time. Unlike our young eight year old whose knowledge base was sporadic at best, twenty-first century researchers have been conducting systematic meta-analytical studies. From these they have distilled some compelling and indisputable findings on the important matters that continue to be essential in the education of the young. However, the complexity of this work calls out for still further simplification. For example, trying to find a manageable personal message from the 800 odd studies John Hattie (2009) examined in his monumental meta-analytical work has led me to try my arm at a concise synthesis of my own using all eighteen of the influences on students' achievement which Hattie has shown have an effect size greater than 0.4 (see the Appendix for the full list). Why? Because any influence higher than this figure is regarded as above the average for educational research and therefore terribly important in raising achievement. My synthesis, which is in statement form to aid understanding, includes reference to all 18 influences but it is presented as five *Must Do's* for teachers.

**1. I must be family and community conscious:** For all of the students in my class, I must know and understand the needs, interests and abilities they bring with them from home, the nature of the families and communities from which they come and how involved their parents or carers are in encouraging and supporting their learning at school as these are highly influential factors in my students' learning.

**2. I must be committed to feedback-informed learning:** Given a good understanding of my students' backgrounds, I must provide them relevant learning experiences of high quality with dedicated time given to important priorities matched with feedback on their performance, whether it be feedback related to mastery or remediation. I must acknowledge feedback based on good evidence as the most powerful influence in my professional arsenal.

**3. I must be rich in teaching strategies:** I must value and use direct teaching, particularly for struggling learners but be willing to let the 'high flyers' go further themselves. Feedback and acceleration on challenging goals and tasks, which take children onwards in their learning, act as strong motivators. I must arrange opportunities for my students to work with their peers on collaborative projects both at school and at home. I know that all these actions significantly influence learning and achievement.

**4. I must be powered by professional learning:** Through regular in-service education, I must continue to enhance my teaching repertoire including how best to organise my classroom environment, how to improve my questioning techniques and how to respect and build on the language experiences of the non-native English speakers in my class.

**5. I must be research-informed and relationally conscious:** Overall, I must build my pedagogical repertoire systematically on a platform of research knowledge about the most important and enduring influences on my students but I must not lose sight of how important my relationship with them is, because this binds me and my students together in all we do.

### **Conclusion**

To bring this oration to a conclusion, I return to the question implied in the title: *Are continuity and change estranged companions in Australian education?* My conclusion is that there is a definite tendency in the 'estranged' direction because the matters about which I have spoken are not given the prominence they should be when educational change is introduced. Perhaps reformers take it for granted that teachers are well aware of the 'continuities' which should be

carried forward, no matter what new idea is 'touted'. I suppose the relationship between change and continuity is a bit like the general practitioner in Cairns, or some other equatorial location, being 'battered-up' by a multi-national drug company to prescribe its new pill for low blood pressure. It is a well known and enduring medical fact that dehydration is a key cause of low blood pressure in tropical climates. Simply drinking a lot of water is the important and enduring advice which should never be overlooked by doctors before they prescribe new pills.

I hope that I have shown that there are 'continuities' - important aspects of professional knowledge, from which we as educators should not become 'estranged'. To emphasise this point, I'll finish with the poem 'Stone' by Theresa Van Maanen, the winner of the Josephine Ulrich Prize for 2007. I'd ask you to listen for the message it carries about change, namely, that in going towards a goal, we need to pay attention to what we know and see, in between where we are now, and where we want to be.

## STONE

You throw a stone and walk to it  
You throw a stone and walk to it  
You throw a stone and walk to it.  
Light dust on a path trodden hard  
Dusts your shoes.  
You throw a stone and walk to it  
Head bent you reach down  
Bending from the lowest point of your back.  
You throw a stone and walk to it  
Your shoes are black and in this heat your feet are sweating.  
You throw a stone and walk to it  
One shoelace is less tight than it should be.  
You throw a stone and walk to it  
And as you bend, some of your thought is on the feeling  
Of pulling the laces tighter before doing the bow.  
You throw a stone and walk to it  
You imagine the feeling of perfect balance and the comfort of your  
Inner-sole after the bow is securely tied.  
You throw a stone and walk to it  
The lace drags and casts a trail in the light dust of the hard path like a snake's writhe.  
You throw a stone  
This is how we move forward  
You throw a stone and walk to it.

In their comments about this poem the Judges said:

*'Stone' is about focusing and really looking and seeing. It is about 'bringing to mind', bringing into the mind what is with us. Poetry should do this. It should bring the world back into focus for us when we have lost our focus...For truly living and being conscious is about paying attention to our lives and also to what they might be. Stone is mundane yet profound, repetitive and ultimately new.*

I believe it speaks about our goals and what we must keep in sight as we try to reach them.

**You throw a stone and walk to it.**

I thank the College again for the invitation and the honour of presenting the Oration on its 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary.

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## Appendix

Eighteen (18) influences on student achievement with effect sizes greater than 0.4 (John Hattie, 2009)

Feedback	1.13
Students' prior cognitive ability	1.04
Instructional quality	1.00
Instructional quantity	.84
Direct instruction	.82
Acceleration	.72
Home factors	.67
Remediation/feedback	.65
Student disposition to learn	.61
Class environment	.52
Challenge of goals	.52
Bilingual programs	.51
Peer tutoring	.50
Mastery Learning	.50
Teacher in-service education	.49
Parent involvement	.46
Homework	.43
Questioning	.41