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EMPOWERING LEARNING FOR THE 21ST CENTURY

Summary: Clinton Golding: From Thinking Skills to Thinking Schools'

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Here is my summary of what I found thought-provoking, relevant and useful in the workshops presented by Clinton. Additional material and references provided by Intuyu Consulting (www.intuyuconsulting.com.au)

NOTES:

“There is no thinking without Inquiry.”

- If there is no question, there is no thinking. Learning must be based on open-ended questions for which there can be a number of possible solutions. Clinton's workshop, *'From thinking skills to thinking schools'* supported this statement as he explored the challenges that schools face in creating themselves as thinking communities and how these challenges can be addressed.

Key points (Clinton Golding)

- Teachers are often trained to deliver 'thinking' materials & strategies which they have NOT necessarily mastered themselves.
- Teachers generally have excellent knowledge, but often lack the SKILLS to facilitate the learning of thinking
- If 'thinking' is taught as a separate subject, it is because schools want teachers to be explicit but know that their teachers lack mastery.



Schools, therefore, must seek out quality professional development opportunities for their teachers in order to support them in developing mastery in thinking skills.

- ✚ Teachers should be encouraged to pursue mastery through a number of means: further education, sharing best practice with colleagues and through quality professional learning.
- ✚ School leaders must recognise that Culture shift TAKES TIME! The research that Clinton has done in this area suggests 5+ years.

Clinton suggested that a useful, thought-provoking way to begin the journey, aside from seeking to clarify your school's *vision* and *mission* is to ask yourself:

How does your school define an *excellent teacher??*

Clinton went on to outline the three dimensions of being a 'good thinker':

COGNITIVE - What we think and know
AFFECTIVE – What we feel and value
BEHAVIOURAL – What we do and say

Clinton went on to note that it is important to acknowledge that outcomes-driven means of assessment, such as NAPLAN, which measure knowledge rather than identifying skills and capacities are prevalent in our education system. School communities, whilst existing within this framework, **must still create themselves, first and foremost, as thinking communities**, not, as Sir Ken Robinson suggested 'industrial age knowledge factories.' Robinson had this to say about standardised education:



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"The fact is that given the challenges we face, education doesn't need to be reformed -- it needs to be transformed. The key to this transformation is not to standardize education, but to personalize it, to build achievement on discovering the individual talents of each child, to put students in an environment where they want to learn and where they can naturally discover their true passions."

- [Ken Robinson \(The Element: How Finding Your Passion Changes Everything\)](#)

Clinton posed a question to the many school leaders present at the workshop:

What does your staff know about good thinking, value about the development of thinking and what are they actually doing, to this end, in the classroom on a daily basis?

The same question should be applied to your students!

In Summary:

The first decision that school must make, according to Clinton Golding, is to prioritise thinking. Becoming a thinking community must be the school's top priority; otherwise it will simply be 'crowded out' by other perceived imperatives. Schools can then begin the work of developing teachers and leaders in the mastery of thinking skills through quality professional learning and practise, even as they begin the conversation about thinking with students. A clear way forward is to develop a framework for effective learning which identifies the traits/habits of a good learner and what constitutes good thinking.

To learn more about how this process was undertaken in a government secondary school in Victoria visit:

<http://www.sst-inet.net/resources/olc/papers/frameworkforeffective.aspx>

The above article outlines the project undertaken in the early 2000s by McKinnon Secondary College, under the leadership of then Assistant Principal Peter Corkill. Peter is now principal of the John Monash Science School, Victoria's new select-entry school for students who excel in mathematics, sciences and associated technologies.