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# Preface

Motivating students is one of the most important functions of any education system and institution. Motivating and engaging classrooms are exciting places to be in. Not only are the students actively engaged in learning and extending themselves, but so are the teachers in these classrooms.

Contributions to this book are from highly skilled teachers and education practitioners with a wealth of experience. We have also included a vital ingredient in any discussion on student motivation: the perspective of students themselves.

From the articles included in this book, it is apparent that there are common characteristics of motivated classrooms:

- Students are actively engaged in their own learning.
- Fewer situations requiring discipline arise.
- Teachers are engaged in their own learning.
- Students are prepared to learn from each other and to help each other.
- Teachers become partners in learning.
- Students develop and display an enquiry approach to learning.
- Students gain an understanding of the learning process.
- Teachers become education providers rather than education deliverers.

Developing motivated classrooms requires:

- Support from the school community
- Adequate resourcing
- Effective professional development
- Risk-taking by teachers
- A willingness by teachers to share with each other and to accept challenges as they arise.

This book will assist teachers to gain an understanding of student motivation. It will also provide information to enable Professional Development Managers to act as key change agents in this process.



# *Integrating curriculum in a secondary setting*

Patricia Barry, Sue Oakley and Bronwyn Pitty

## **W**hy integrate?

Traditional secondary school curriculum can present students with an array of disjointed and unconnected facts, restricted by artificial subject boundaries. Although many students enjoy the contrast to the primary school model, we must ask whether this approach is truly motivating and actually caters for the needs of these young people. John Baird (Baird and Northfield (Ed.), 1992) identifies a number of poor learning tendencies characteristic of secondary students. These include, 'lack of external reflective thinking' which is a student's inability to '...link the content of one school subject with the outside world or other subjects'. James Beane (1991) believes that middle school curriculum should focus on '...widely shared concerns of early adolescents and the larger world'. Curriculum planning and delivery is often a difficult task for teachers in a secondary setting as they struggle to draw meaningful links within the bounds of one learning area. An integrated approach broadens the opportunities for teachers to assist students to develop external reflection and, consequently, to see the curriculum as relevant to their everyday lives.

Not all models of integrated curriculum address these issues. Julie Hamston and Kath Murdoch (1996), for example, warn against the use of themes to help learners make connections between various subject areas: '...thematic units were a smorgasbord of activities loosely built around a topic rather than a careful selection of activities designed to gradually build understandings...' (Hamston and Murdoch, 1996, p.9). James Beane (1991) stresses that '... real curriculum integration occurs when young people confront personally meaningful questions and engage in experiences related to those questions - experiences that they can integrate into their own system of meanings'. When describing social education Hamston and

Murdoch (1996) also emphasise the need to base curriculum on 'topics of substance and significance', assisting the learner to understand big ideas rather than isolated facts. For example, the content that *drives* the curriculum in a meaningful context can be readily identified in studies of society and environment (SOSE), science and health curriculum materials. English and mathematics skills are used as tools to support the learning outcomes from these key learning areas.

This chapter looks at an interdisciplinary approach trialled by teams of year 7 and 8 teachers at Benalla College, Victoria. Three units are referred to in the text. They are 'Animal Adaptations and Survival' and 'Our Asian Neighbours', both written in 1998, and 'Shake, Rattle and Rock' written in 1999. These units have been widely distributed throughout Victoria. They all exemplify the idea of finding a 'focus' rather than a theme, and how this can be achieved within the demands of the Curriculum and Standards Framework (CSF). The authors reflect not only on outcomes for students, but also on the benefits for teachers involved in the planning and delivery of an integrated curriculum.

### **School organisation: enhancing an integrated approach**

In 1998, after a period of review, Benalla College developed a Junior Subschool structure which involved all year 7 students, and included Year 8 students the following year. Within the junior school, several learning groups were established. These comprised 3 or 4 student pastoral groups from Year 7 and Year 8, and an appointed team of teachers to whom they related most of the time. In order to limit the number of teachers within a team, teachers were encouraged to teach more than one discipline to students in their learning group. These teams of teachers were able to meet regularly to discuss student management, welfare issues and curriculum development.

Planning with colleagues from different key learning areas (KLAs) was a new experience for many teachers, as previously most meetings were conducted on a faculty basis. However, a cultural shift became apparent as these teachers were now given the time and opportunity to exchange ideas about curriculum appropriate to this age group. As many team members were familiar with PEEL (Project for Enhancement of Effective Learning), this also provided a forum for the exchange of good teaching and learning practices. Teachers were also mindful of students' different learning styles when developing classroom activities. Opportunities to integrate learning outcomes were slowly identified and may only have included fortuitous links at first, but planning of substantial integrated units followed. The organisation of the junior subschool was therefore an important element supporting the evolution of this interdisciplinary approach.

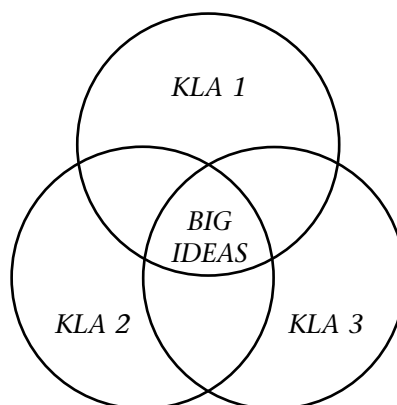
## Choosing an integrated model

A number of models for integration have been identified. Not all of them use a predetermined focus to determine what will be regarded as relevant content and skills for any particular unit. This was regarded as an important function of any model as the units that resulted were cohesive, rather than being a collection of superficially similar material from different KLAs.

In choosing the model, an over-riding concern was that it had to address the needs of students in their middle years of schooling. The model had to deal with the 'big ideas about the world' (Hamston and Murdoch, 1997) and demonstrate that the curriculum and the students' learning were linked by those ideas.

The similarities in material between the KLAs was identified as a preferred starting point, and also influenced the model that was chosen. For example, the links between the big ideas of science and SOSE, with respect to studies of the environment, were very obvious. The model chosen, termed the *focus approach*, is illustrated here.

### The Focus Approach



Overlaps in a particular area of study determine the content of an integrated unit.  
Not all KLA outcomes are achieved in the integrated unit.

This relationship between subjects would be the basis for a unit of work that would last a number of weeks. Once the unit is underway, the boundaries between the learning areas can be removed. If the students are involved in the research task, for example, then it can theoretically continue across their classes for a considerable part of the day. The possibilities for *fortuitous links* then become very apparent.