Transcript of Plenary Presentation "Using a values framework to map and make sense of change experiences: What can a Thinking Conference in Sweden tell us about change?"

What follows is a transcript, and lists of references and recommended readings.

I am deeply appreciative of the support and encouragement of ATEM in receiving the Vic Branch International Scholarship to attend the 13th international Thinking Conference in Sweden in June 2007. This was a life changing experience for me and I wish to share it with you today for two reasons.

- Firstly, to report back to members by sharing my experiences and learning.

- Secondly, to encourage you all to think about applying for this or other professional development opportunities that ATEM offers.

Today's conference uses a theme of the 'experience of change' as a lens to identify and explore emerging trends and current challenges for professional staff working and managing in the tertiary education sector. My presentation will segment this 'experience of change' into three parts—past, present and future.

Any change management journey should always begin by acknowledging the past, how have others experienced similar changes, what people have accomplished up to now, what are people are being asked to let go of, etc.

Thinking about the values and other under the surface intangibles is one way to interrogate clashing paradigmatic views—so often the reason change management initiatives end in tears—because values can serve as a bridge between the past, present and future.

It has been acknowledged in the literature that the cultural shifts necessary to move agendas forward, be they organisational or societal, have historically been shown to be the hardest shifts to make.

The ATEM Scholarship gave me the opportunity to move my thinking beyond my 2006 TEM conference paper (Davis, 2006) where I outlined the 'state of play' of an underfunded and undervalued tertiary education sector in Australia.

I was frustrated at a personal level and finding it increasingly difficult to provide the quality service and support to research students and academic researchers due to decreases in funding whilst at the same time absorbing the increasing 'busy' work including, compliance and surveillance reporting. This was getting in the way of what I knew to be the core work of a university—that is teaching and research and having an adverse effect on the health and wellbeing of myself and my professional and academic colleagues.

By allowing me to attend and present at the Thinking Conference, the Scholarship also gave me the most valuable gift of all--time out from the immediate pressures of work to think, learn, reflect and write about the contemporary tertiary education sector in Australia.

The Thinking Conference has synergies with today's conference. Whenever we have an opportunity to "think in the future tense" at conferences like this one today, the international TEM conference or

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a biennial Thinking conference it presents us with the challenge to look outside our immediate comfort zone.

These conferences give us a chance to get out from under the weight of the everyday and think 'big picture' by giving predominance to innovative ideas, knowledge creation and strengthening the will to apply them.

Can we create societies that enhance social and environmental development as well as economic development? What role does the tertiary education sector have in preparing our nation for the future? Do we live in a society or an economy?? If not us, who? If not now, when?

Can we think through the 'road blocks' to find not only new concepts and practices, but also new ways of thinking about old problems? The Thinking Conference series which has been running for 26 years is uniquely placed to bring together people from different disciplines, contexts and countries to both share their own breakthroughs as well as learn from other people's stories.

I will now review 3 presentations from the thinking conference to share with you today. Please note that the 2009 Thinking Conference will be held in Malaysia in June (http://www.14ththinkingconference.com/).

1. Prof David Perkins, Harvard University, USA

Founding member of Project Zero at Harvard, Prof Perkins and has attended all 13 Thinking Conferences. He gave two insightful and thought provoking presentations about "The Thoughtful Will" and "Five Languages of War".

In his 5 languages of war presentation, Prof Perkins gave a mesmerizing presentation unpacking the patterns of thinking of the general public and the political elite that generate and sustain no-win conflicts. Perkins surfaced the often invisible practices at play and gave examples of how these five languages stir deep currents of human thought and emotion and how political figures use them to inflame passions and inspire commitment.

The five languages of war presentation are as relevant to war as to any ideological position— because rhetoric so often gets converted to <u>oppositional</u> forces.

The five languages of war are:

- Of gain and God
- Dominance and resistance
- Good and evil
- Regrettable necessity
- Zealous allegiance

Who would have thought that a presentation about the five languages of war would have so much resonance with the work we all do? The talk was about breaking down the mainly rhetorical reasons why a leader would choose 'war' over peace' (or any other ideological binary, for example we could easily insert 'economic rationalism' over 'triple bottom line' governance). For those of us lucky

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enough to attend the ATEM breakfast a few years ago that featured a presentation by Barry Jones, you may be reminded of a similar theme—that of surfacing the invisible way we are managed by economic rationalist language.

In Barry Jones's case he gave a decoder for this economic rationalist language. He used the TINA acronym ('there is no alternative') in a similar way that Perkins has thought about 'regrettable necessity'.

2. Prof Howard Gardner, Harvard University, USA

Another Professor from Harvard (Education) Prof Gardner is best known for his work on Multiliteracies. Of particular interest to me though was his presentation on another of his research interests, that of "Good Work".

Howard Gardner suggests that good work is the work that is at once excellent in quality technically, personally engaging and meaningful, and carried out in a responsible and ethical manner.

His research pointed to the importance of making sure the right conditions are present to support good work and he suggested that key opportunities to nurture a good work ethic are:

- early value systems (often religious)
- the first workplace (internships)
- vertical support (mentors)
- horizontal support (peers)
- periodic booster shots (positive and cautionary examples - like conferences?)

3. Dr Goran Carstedt, Sweden

Dr Carstedt is the current Chairman of The Natural Step International, working on projects of sustainability with Al Gore and has worked in executive leadership roles with Ikea and Volvo.

His topic was on "co-creating a desired future" and was very much an example of 'working with' leadership possibilities.

His message?

- What if people don't mind *change*, but they do mind being *changed*? What if people are not led by *managers*, but by *good ideas*?
    - We need to place our mission, work and organisation into the bigger picture and it has to be relevant to the times we are living in. We have to be able to show that we are seeing ourselves as part of a bigger whole
    - Then organise ourselves by inviting people to co-create (rather than a top-down approach) which is much better suited to get results in an increasing complex and chaotic world
    - Create more energy by having leaders take an outside-in approach which is like bottom-up rather than top-down.

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The 'V' Factor

As well as the opportunity to attend the Thinking Conference the scholarship also gave me the chance to co-present a refereed paper which was in itself a huge learning opportunity for me as it helped me make sense of the times we are living through.

> The paper details , 'The 'V' Factor: thinking about values as the epicentre of leadership, learning and life' (Nanschild & Davis, 2007).

> Abstract: This paper places the 'V' factor at the epicentre of meaningful and productive living, learning and leadership endeavour. It explores the authors' reflections upon their own professional experiences, research studies and review of the literature as they work towards establishing '*working with*' leadership practices appropriate for a knowledge era. This paper also reports on Nanschild's preliminary PhD findings of "*A Values-Based Approach to Leadership Development: Implications for Organisational Change*".

> Keywords: values; leadership; leadership development; golden capital; knowledge based economy

When we reflect on a systems approach to human relations we can see that our subliminal value sets are at the very epicentre of human endeavour. Our values—and what we value—as individuals and groups, have the capacity to impact positively or negatively on our leadership, learning and day to day living. The art of productive living, learning and leadership is in fact intertwined and our values, espoused or otherwise, are deeply embedded in this trinity.

The priorities that energise us can be seen in the collection of life experiences that empower us. Our stories tell about growing up, family life, work and what gives us joy. If we listen closely to them, we will recognise them and give them voice.

These priorities we call values. They are the basis of the remembered incidents that we live by.

What are values?

- Usually tacit and unexamined yet values underpin everything that we are
- Values are deeply held beliefs that drive our behaviour.
- Values are ideals that shape and give significance to our lives.
- They are reflected through the priorities that we choose, the decisions we make and the actions we take.
- We expend energy defending our values
- Espoused values vs. values-in-action.

When you identify the values of a human being or an organisation, you are identifying the inherent wisdom necessary for their development. It is not new – it is bringing what is already present into consciousness.

Foundation, Focus and Future Values

Foundation values lie in the history of people and organisations. Management futurists like Peter Drucker and Jennifer James employ pattern recognition—looking back to history—as a way of predicting the patterns of the future.   History tells us that when significant shifts occur affecting the social fabric of society—for example, the invention of the printing press, the industrial or information revolutions—we as a society initially carry on with established ways of doing things. It took 58 years, for example, after the invention of the printing press for a non-biblical text to be printed.

Whilst history and the past are salient indicators of patterns and behaviours of change, our *focus values* influence our day-to-day operations.

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Foundation values that have not been fully developed or matured will distort our *focus values* lens, such that we cannot move beyond the day-to-day operations to 'see' a possible vision of the future. Even today we see examples of cultural lag, in the proliferation of command and control mechanisms from an industrial era. Increasing reliance on compliance and surveillance, for example, are attempts to control order in an increasingly complex global, networked and information rich world.

The machine-age, scientific worldview of '*if it can't be measured it can't be managed*' is still prevalent but it is no longer appropriate because this view does not acknowledge that the real key performance indicators required for success in the new millennium are likely to be intangible. Our paper argued that the overuse of such control mechanisms and economic rationalist single bottom line practices are actually part of the problem, not a solution. This behaviour is an example of regression under pressure to outmoded *foundation values*, limiting the scope of our focus values and diverting energy from thinking about the true purpose of governments, learning institutions, enterprises and individuals.

Future values provide the motivation for developing new skills because they reflect the future aspirations of individuals, groups, enterprises and communities. *Future values* clarify vision and have the potential to **propel** us into the future because they represent a vision worth aspiring to.

The values domain is a dynamic environment where foundation values are not likely to change too much, rather strengthen and where focus and future values can and do shift with experience and a purposeful life.
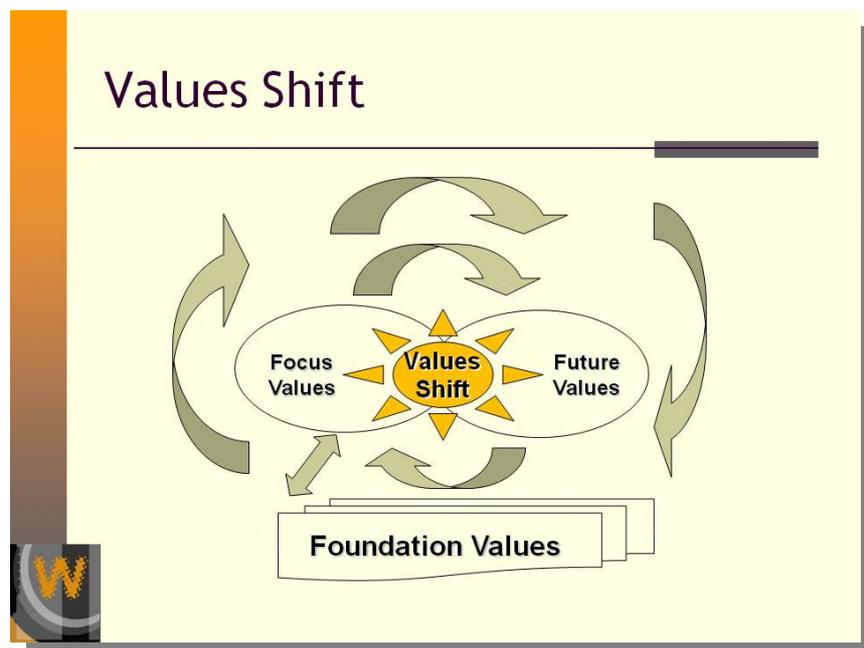
Example:

ATEM is moving its PD structure from a state based to a national one. We are going through that change now.

Our foundation values have been strengthened by the mapping of the past and which has culminated in the publication by Maree Conway in 2007 called "Inherent Uncertainty ATEM 1976-

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2006….".

We are in the middle of these changes now so ATEMs focus and futures values are dynamically playing out right now.

Right now we as association members are being asked to contribute to this future by completing a survey about how we think ATEM's professional development work should be in the future.

Remember that our futures values can propel us into the future we want.
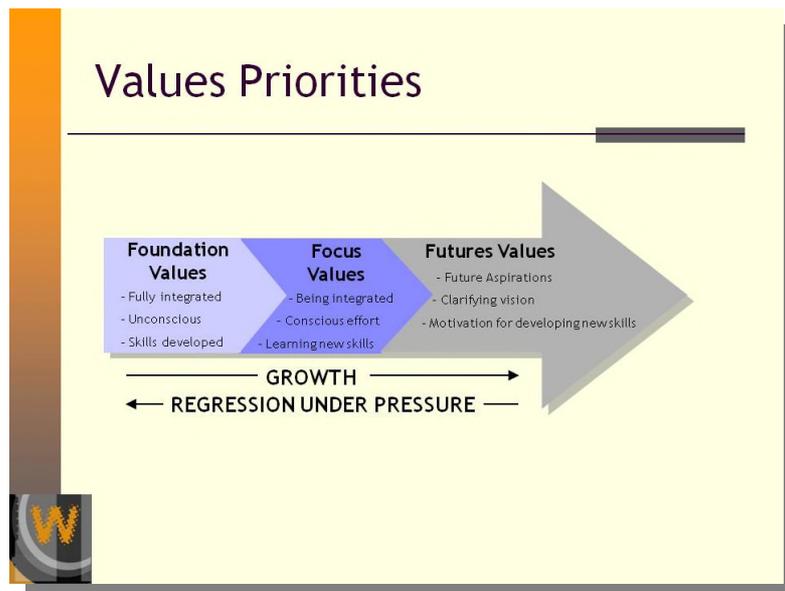
Conclusion

We are living in complex, ambiguous times where change is not only a constant but it is also discontinuous. We must look to streamlining our processes, not adding to them, if we are to sustain ourselves and our planet.

We can't keep up this punishing pace and often invisible work that we all do in this sector due to no small measure a lack of adequate funding to the sector.

Two ways of thinking about how we might do this are integration and conflation…..and seeing our work as part of what we do.

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In closing I would like to ponder where our experiences of change may take us, as individuals, leaders and the tertiary education management sectors place our society.

1. Knowing ourselves well. Look, for example, at reflecting how you own actions are playing a part in conflict or misunderstanding (i.e. double look learning) (Argyris, 2004). Consider working on the 50% of the problem that you have total control over!

2. Leadership is about energy management (Kets de Vries, 2003).

    The first responsibility of a leader is to define reality. The last is to say thank you. In between the leader is a servant. The signs of outstanding leaders appear primarily among the followers. Are the followers reaching their potential? Are they learning? Serving? Do they achieve the required results? Do they change with grace? Manage conflict? (De Pree, 1989).

    Leadership Thinking – making time for reflexive and prospective practice. We are all, at once, leaders and followers. So, even though we are always very busy with the present and immediate we need to think about our own professional practice. This means critically reflecting on our work and dealings with others, and even our mistakes. This also means taking the time to plan for the future and keeping up with our readings, thinking and testing ourselves by triangulation or references that are not non self referential.

3. We live and work in a society—not an economy—we must reconnect with our purpose and not be **diverted** from it (Drucker, 1993). The purpose of the higher education sector is a lofty one, it is both the vehicle and driver of the nation's future prosperity, and its priorities are in teaching and research.

    "There is nothing so useless as doing efficiently that which should not be done at all" Peter Drucker (1909 - 2005).

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Recommended Reading

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Note: The 14th International Thinking Conference will be held in Malaysia, 22-26 June 2009 - http://www.14ththinkingconference.com.