



CONSTANTS & CERTAINTIES IN SCHOOLING

ST MARY'S COLLEGE
October 2005

Jim Dellit



IT' SIMPLE...

- **LEARNING**
- **LEARNING**
- **LEARNING**

Comes from:

- **TEACHING**
- **TEACHING**
- **TEACHING**

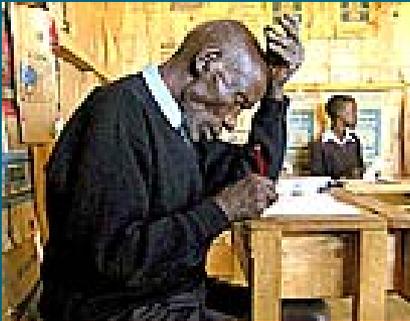
Naganga Maruge is 85 and lives in Kenya. He was illiterate and received no formal schooling.

When the government promised free education for all in 2004, he took his cane, collected the school uniform, and went off to first grade.

"I'm very happy in my heart. Now I know about writing, and I can add one plus one. I can read my name..."

"I want to learn the computer"

"I can say 'I went to school like everybody else' ".



Some critics...

Pell's text message: English syllabus has no morals

Jill Rowbotham, Religious affairs writer
September 22, 2005

SCHOOLS that abandoned traditional English programs in favour of "critical literacy" were trying to make students agents of social change, Cardinal George Pell warned yesterday.

In a speech in Canberra yesterday, the Catholic archbishop said some schools were placing too much focus on texts that normalised "moral and social disorder".

- "While parents wonder why their children have never heard of the Romantic poets, Yeats or the Great War poets, and never ploughed through a Bronte, Orwell or Dickens novel, their children are engaged in analysing a variety of 'texts', including films, magazines, advertisements and even road signs as part of critical literacy," Cardinal Pell declared.

States rated on Year 12 excellence

Samantha Maiden
September 24, 2005

- **STATES** will have their Year 12 English, maths, physics and chemistry courses ranked in order of excellence in an attempt to stop "dumbed down" curriculums short-changing Australian students.

Federal Education Minister Brendan Nelson has confirmed plans to introduce a national report card for key subjects

- "I am concerned that standards are being dumbed down," Dr Nelson said yesterday. "These rankings, if you like, will not be done by me. I expect the experts in mathematics and physics to tell me, and tell Australia, what is the highest standard in Australia down to the lowest."
- "All students need to be taught contemporary literacy, film and television, but we are in an environment where increasingly the kids are studying Buffy the Vampire Slayer and Big Brother instead of Jane Austen and Bronte," he told *The Weekend Australian*.



- MESS

- MUSH

- MESH

Making a hash of it...

- *I am very anxious to return to my classroom and teach science. Constructivism has taught me that I do not need to know any science in order to teach it. I will simply allow my students to figure things out for themselves, for I know there is no **right** answer.*

(Richardson, p1630)

- 
- *We would not call someone ‘bilingual’ unless she has mastered more than one language. I don’t call courses ‘interdisciplinary’ unless the user has mastered more than one discipline. Most of what is called interdisciplinary work before high school is really pre-disciplinary work... schools will show their worth if they succeed in inculcating those precious habits of mind called the disciplines.*
 - (Howard Gardner, ‘The Constructivist Classroom’, *Educational Leadership*, 1999.)



ANAGRAMS FOR
ESSENTIAL LEARNINGS

Take your pick...

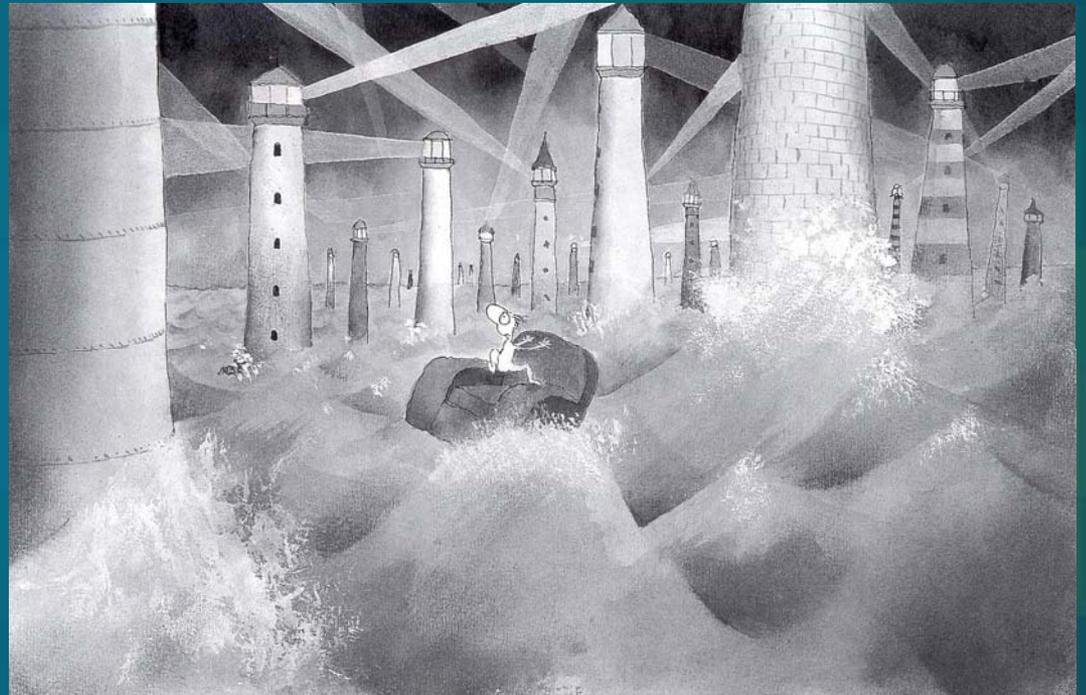
- **General saintliness**
or
- **Satan engineers ills**
or
- **Tireless, inane slang**

There is a limit to what curriculum frameworks can achieve in the classroom...



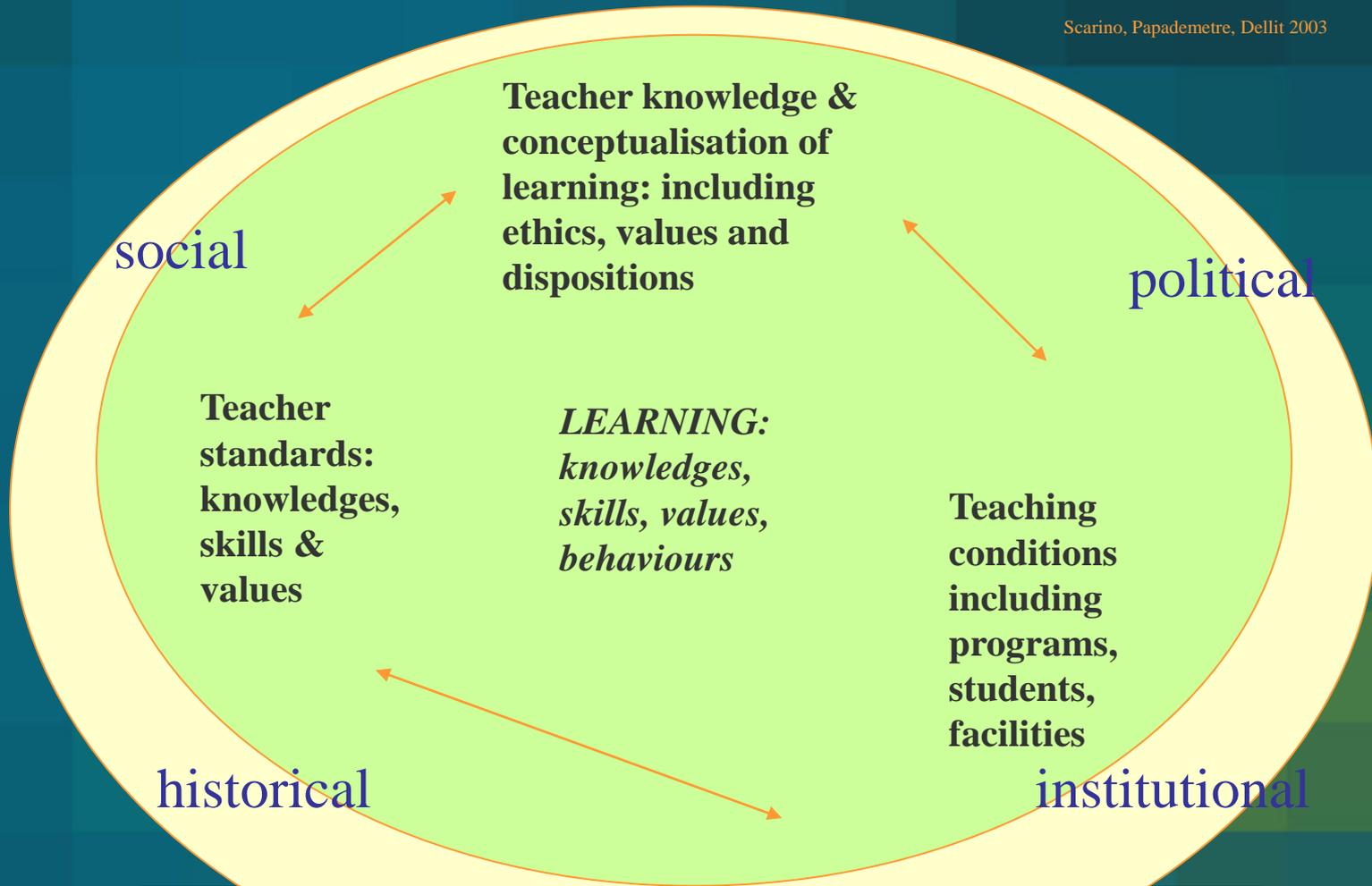
*And how am I to face the odds
Of man's bedevilment and God's?
I, a stranger and afraid
In a world I never made.*

(A.E. Houseman, 1922)



Teaching is complex...

Scarino, Papademetre, Dellit 2003



EXPECTATIONS: ACCOUNTABILITIES

AVOID 'BUSY WORK'...

“ACTIVE INERTIA”:

responding to changed conditions by doing too much, unfocussed, activity.

- *Strategic frameworks become blinders.*
- *Processes harden into routines.*
- *Relationships become shackles.*
- *Values harden into dogmas.*



Donald N Sull: *Why good companies go bad*; 2000



CERTAINTIES

CONSTANTS

- Ethics
- Professionalism
- Contextual change

Prof Per Dalin's 'constants'

1. Students need to learn basic knowledge and skills

- (He includes their language, subject discipline structures, basic numerical competence, natural & social sciences, the ability to deal with at least one foreign language, the understanding the structure of scientific paradigms)

2. 'Basic' is also to learn to learn

- (He describes the ability to connect new information with an existing understanding of the structure of a subject field, understanding the impact of context, reasoning, goal setting, self-critical skills)

3. Problem solving

- ("However important an understanding of subject fields is, that is not sufficient in today's world, and it certainly will not be sufficient in tomorrow's world")

4. Communication

- Skills of communicating in a 'horizontal' society. These must be learnt/taught, not acquired simply by using them with students gaining increasing insights – linked to foreign language mastery –globalisation – includes data and picture communication and analysis)

5. Knowledge & Understanding

- (Understanding is something more than knowing: we understand something first when it has meaning, when it leads to practical use, when it leads to insight – creating new knowledge is significant)

6. Closeness (intimacy) and belonging

- (Need for adult role models and models of relationships and of 'love' in the school.)

7. The consumer and the producer

- (Important for students to learn how to be producers – goods, services, creativity, ideas, politics. Also important for students to learn to be critical consumers and to develop and apply values, and ethics)

- *Successful schools understand that the direct improvement of teaching and learning in every classroom comes via a constellation of individuals and groups who undertake a myriad of activities and initiatives.*

Carl Glickman *Leadership for Learning:
How to help teachers succeed,*

ASCD

