

## CALDWELL REPORT ON GENEVA CONFERENCE

Deputy Chair Professor Emeritus Brian Caldwell represented ACARA at a conference of the Centre for Curriculum Redesign (CCR) hosted by the International School of Geneva October 22-24. The theme of the conference was Character Education for a Challenging Century. In addition to ACARA, CCR is supported by New South Wales (represented at the conference by Brian Smyth King, Executive Director, Learning and Engagement, Department of Education and Communities) and Victoria, represented by Monica Bini, Curriculum Manager, Humanities and Social Science, Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority).

There were powerful presentations from 15 experts on aspects of the theme (presentations are available on line at: <http://curriculumredesign.org/character-education-conference-contents-now-available-including-the-geneva-declaration/>). The event was an opportunity for CCR to update its thinking on curriculum design. The work of CCR is driven by the question 'What should students learn for the 21<sup>st</sup> century?' The update was provided by Charles Fadel, Founder and Chair of CCR and former Global Education Lead at Cisco Systems and Cisco liaison with UNESCO and the World Bank. The following is drawn from Fadel's presentation (Fadel 2014a) and his recent publications (Fadel 2014, Trilling and Fadel 2009).

Reflecting a general trend, CCR prefers to refer to '21<sup>st</sup> Century Education' rather than '21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills' although there are certain attributes ('skills') that are especially important. For CCR, 21<sup>st</sup> Century Education may be represented by three intersecting sets comprised of:

Knowledge 'What you know': Traditional Subjects, Modern Subjects

Skills 'How you use what you know': Creativity, Critical Thinking, Communication and Collaboration

Character 'How you engage with the world': Mindfulness, Curiosity, Courage, Resilience, Ethics and Leadership

Applying to all is the concept of Metacognition: 'How you reflect and learn'.

At first sight 'character' may not be the best or even an appropriate word but Fadel provided a helpful elaboration:

Character refers to Agency, Attitudes, Behaviours, Dispositions, Mindsets, Personality, Temperament and Values (CCR)

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Social and Emotional Skills (OECD)

The matching of 'character' to 'social and emotional skills' refers to a current major project of the OECD that will report in 2015.

Fadel provided an open-ended set of associated traits and concepts for each of the six elements of 'character'. For example, for curiosity: open-mindedness, explorations, passion, self-direction, motivation, wonder, beauty, initiative, innovation, enthusiasm and spontaneity; and for mindedness: self-awareness, self-actualization, vision, insight, observation, consciousness, compassion, equanimity, happiness, authenticity, listening, presence, sharing, interconnectedness, empathy, sensibility, patience, acceptance, appreciation, tranquillity, balance, spirituality, existentiality, oneness, gratitude, interdependency, social awareness and cross-cultural awareness.

Among the key themes to emerge was that issues related to 'general capabilities' in the Australian Curriculum are of international concern; for example, the extent to which these should be considered in isolation or as part of the formal and informal curriculum. The role of organisations and agencies outside the school was raised; for example, the opportunities created through participation in programs offered by the Scouting movement, including Girl

Guides, and, for Commonwealth countries, in schemes like the Duke of Edinburgh's International Award Scheme.

### **References**

Fadel, C. (2014a). 'Character education framework for the 21<sup>st</sup> century'. Presentation at an international conference on the theme *Character Education for a Challenging Century* hosted by the Centre for Curriculum Redesign (CCR), International School of Geneva, Switzerland, 22-24 October.

Fadel, C. (2014b). *Education with a Capital E*. Occasional Paper 134. Melbourne: Centre for Strategic Education.

Trilling, B. and Fadel, C. (2009). *21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills*. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons.