as those on iPhones, iPads and iPods as a new educational medium.

This limited study first tested the vocabulary level of a group of 90 school children, ages three to seven, who were then given an iPod Touch loaded with the 'Little Houses' literacy app to use over a period of two weeks. All play was to be self-initiated with no requirements for use given. At the end of the two weeks, it was found that the children had played with the iPod Touch, on average, for a total of five hours across that time. Another vocabulary test revealed an increase in vocabulary acquisition by as much as 31 per cent. (CNET Reviews, 10/6/10).

The message coming through this study and another conducted by Nielsen indicates children are becoming very tech savvy. (NielsenWire, 9/12/09). They are at home with the technology and use it without making distinctions between learning and playing. Rather than being detrimental to a child's brain, it seems worthwhile to consider that mobile technology may have a real place in schools.

Victoria has also shown interest in the potential of the iPod as the Brumby Government distributes more than 500 iPods to eight schools, with the stated intention of enabling students to learn with the latest technology. Innovation in Australian education may be short-lived, however, as a federal election has been called for 21 August, and opposition leader Tony Abbott has made clear his intention to scrap the Computers in Schools program if elected. (Australia to News, 10/6/10).

If the program remains on track, by the end of 2011, 700,000 computers will have been delivered to schools. It seems incredible that planning for the future in our schools can hang on such a tenuous balance.

Mrs Camilla Elliot, Head of Library & E-learning Manager, Mazzard College, Mulgrave, Victoria
E: c.elliott@mazzard.vic.edu.au

Addressing Social Media Head On!

EDUCATION right now is in an interesting place to say the least. Educational innovators like Sir Ken Robinson believe we are on the brink of an educational revolution. School leaders are dealing with more issues than they ever imagined possible, with the increasing popularity of social networking sites. Cyber bullying issues are through the roof and at the back of our minds the big question is 'What on earth is coming next?' Any wonder principals are receiving payouts for stress? (Age, 6/7/10).

Facebook, Twitter, MySpace, Bebo, MSN - are they really the enemies of education? Or, when it comes down to it, are they just a fundamental shift in how we communicate these days? Could the real enemy be our lack of understanding, fear of the unknown and being completely unprepared for how big social networking has become? Unfortunately our unpreparedness and fear has been many schools banning and reacting, rather than successfully teaching our students how to conduct themselves responsibly and safely online.

One principal in the USA went so far as to write a letter to all parents asking them to join the school in not allowing their children to be involved in any social media. This principal clearly had no understanding of the sheer magnitude of sites like Facebook. There might be times when school leaders have felt they would like to see the back of social media sites, but they look like they're here to stay. Socialnomics.net, in their Social Media Revolution YouTube clip, reported that Facebook gained 200 million users in less than a year, radio took 38 years, TV took 13 years and the Internet took four years to get a quarter of that amount of users. So to bury our heads in the sand and wait for this 'fad' to pass is a mad move.

I was reading Tom Whitby's blog 'My Island View (Deal or No Deal?'), 29 April, 2010 and he makes the point clear: 'Either they (school leaders) acknowledge that kids are doing social networking and teach them to be appropriate and responsible online, or they can ban it from the school, ignoring to address any skills'. Tom also went on to say 'Our educational leaders have a choice: deal with the issue with education, or do not deal with it by banning it. A ban will leave the problem for others to deal with after it becomes a larger issue'.

Ms Justin Sand, education consultant, MyLearning, Benalla, Victoria
Website: www.mylearningpite.com.au

Two further articles follow. IR.Cutter!

Feeling the Curriculum Squeeze

'IT seems nowadays that every interest group and government department is calling for their cause to be included in what has become an increasingly crowded curriculum' (Medlen, ABC News, 22/6/2010). This is not a new problem for teachers and school communities. Just as Cameron Archer (ABC Rural, 7/7/10) calls for the inclusion of Farm Studies within the National Curriculum, so too, the Monash Report (1993) justified the prioritisation of health and physical education to address a perceived decrease in society's fitness and activity levels. With each injury on a bicycle comes renewed calls for the inclusion of bike education (Courier Mail, 12/7/10), and with every drug addict found in a lone unconscious comes the urgent appeals for more drug education in schools (Leaders Newspaper Group, 21/7/10). This constant call to include more within the school curriculum is symptomatic of a need to refocus on the purposes of schooling.

Professor Alan Reid (UniSA, National Symposium on Schooling, 23/7/10) describes three public purposes for schooling. He talks about democratic purposes that prepare students to participate within society, and individual purposes that build specific capacities and capabilities within that child for his/her life. The third group of purposes he suggests are economic purposes that equip students and a country to participate in global markets. These purposes are important but are not easily applied to understand the roots of debates over the contested content of curriculum.

And, the simplified solution of a National Curriculum does not necessarily make the curriculum any less crowded (Professor Max Angus, ABC News, 22/6/10), especially with the competing push to make students' learning
meaningful and relevant. In some sites, the teaching of the traditional subjects maths, literacy, science and history maybe extremely pertinent to the conservative nature of their school philosophy and the associated students' aspirations. However, in others, such as these in rural communities or those with interests in applied learning, those classical studies may appear redundant. What is core learning for different groups of students in different contexts looks very different in our country. One curriculum will get very crowded unless there is the opportunity for different learners to engage with different core knowledges, in different places, for different reasons.

Dr Debra Bateman, School of Education, Deakin University, Burwood
E: debra.bateman@deakin.edu.au

Australians Assist Middle East Development

THREE educationists from Australia and New Zealand will address a global summit in Bahrain in October. Andrew Blair (President of the International Confederation of Principals, Australia), Patrick Griffin (Chair of Education at the University of Melbourne and Executive Director of the Assessment and Teaching of 21st Century Skills - ATC21S) and Kevin Knight (Director of School Improvement Services at the Graduate School of New Zealand) will join speakers from Harvard University, the European Commission, 10 Downing Street and Microsoft at the Education Project 2010. The second occasion of the annual event - initiated by His Royal Highness Prince Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa, the Crown Prince of Bahrain and Chairman of the Kingdom's Economic Development Board (EDB) - runs from 8 to 10 October.

Shaikh Mohammed bin Essa Al Khalifa, Chief Executive of the EDB which is organising the event, said: 'Education is the single most important factor in bringing stability, productivity and prosperity to all societies. Our goal in Bahrain in establishing the Education Project was to bring together an international community of educators. To have experts from Australia and New Zealand - to offer their expertise in identifying practical solutions to address the gap in the global education system - will help to ensure a platform from which to further inspire positive change.'

The Education Project was established to share best practice and create a practical approach that educators can follow to make a difference. The Education Project is free to attend for educational professionals from all sectors as well as from public and private sector institutions with an interest in developing new models and standards in education. For more information and to register online, visit: www.educationprojectbahrain.org. Other speakers confirmed for the Education Project 2010 include Charles Leadbeater, advisor to the government of Shanghai, European Commission and 10 Downing St, UK, Cindy Johanson, executive director, George Lucas Educational Foundation, USA and David Hogan (Centre for Research in Pedagogy and Practice, National Institute of Education, Singapore).

Ms Doreen Bonnani, Bahrain
E: Doreen.Bonnani@theexperiencecorp.com

INFORM COLLEAGUES AND EXPRESS YOUR OPINION IN 'DIRECTIONS IN EDUCATION'!

Writers are sought for forthcoming issues of Directions in Education. Three hundred and fifty-word articles are invited from all readers.

Please email articles in the Directions style (opinion and information citing recent media sources like newspaper, television, radio, internet and magazines) to Ms Debra Brydon at: brydon@cyber-text.net.au or phone for further information on: 0413 089 988.

DISCLAIMER: Directions in Education is a policy advice and commentary service provided by the ACEL. Opinions expressed are those of the writers alone and do not represent official ACEL views. The personal views expressed in Directions in Education do not necessarily represent those of the authors' employers. Articles are invited from all education stakeholders, whether or not they are members of the ACEL, and are deliberately selected to reflect the wide range of views within the Australian and international education community. Readers are encouraged to correspond with writers DIRECTLY on any issue they wish to discuss further – email addresses are provided at the end of each article. Short articles that respond to already published articles are most welcome.

Neither the Managing Editor, the Directors nor the ACEL can guarantee, or take responsibility for, the accuracy or otherwise of any of the information contained in Directions in Education or for any loss or damage arising from statements or opinions contained in any article.

Readers are advised that, at the discretion of individual authors and by virtue, not all of the available personal opinions or information about a particular event, development or policy direction may be published. Interested readers who require more comprehensive information, or who seek the opinions of all stakeholders, are advised to directly contact the institution or persons cited in the report.

'DIRECTIONS in EDUCATION': Copyright © AUSTRALIAN COUNCIL FOR EDUCATIONAL LEADERS 2010. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise without the prior permission of the copyright owner. All inquiries should be made to the ACEL Secretariat.

INQUIRIES & DISTRIBUTION ADVICE AND MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

ACEL Secretariat
Phone: 1800 680 569

Managing Editor: Ms Debra J Brydon
Directors: Emeritus Professor Hedley Beare
Dr Richard Cottrell
Associate Professor David Beckett