



A Personal Realisation March 2003

I have been involved in the middle schooling movement for a long while, both in my own schools, and through project work, and felt that with the best will in the world this devoted band of professionals were unable to make any but the slightest changes to education for young adolescents through our innovations. Programs would begin with verve and excitement and run well for a short while, until either passionate people left the site, or the pressures of other agendas overwhelmed those good intentions. It was tempting to see it as the 'good guys' versus the 'bad guys'. Over time we really hadn't changed anything. It seemed as if we couldn't.

Through our work in the SA Middle Schooling Network we were able to see first hand how these pressures played out. I had read some work on systems theory and had an idea that we had to make revolutions happen in the pedagogies and headsets of teachers, since structural change didn't seem to make any lasting difference on the 'culture' of schooling. But still we were in the 'two steps forward, one step back' pattern. The system was re-establishing itself.

I left the work exhausted and despondent, and came into L2L after a break of 6 months when I looked after myself and did things of importance to me.

Taking up a position in L2L, I began reading again. I realised that the only thing I could work on with any confidence was me: it was my head set that was getting in the way of thinking freshly about this dilemma. This time the readings hit the mark, and I made some sudden insights into how my world view was shaping my capacity to see a situation clearly, and more importantly, to resist taking repetitive useless actions. The L2L manager and presenters, particularly Richard Bawden and Bill Spady, and Mark McCrindle reinforced this new path for me by focussing on recognising our personal 'lens' and its effect on our capacity to see clearly and to make change.

I kicked myself for a while for not being smarter in the past, but realised that if I wasn't ready I just wasn't ready. My questions now are: What would make the conditions right for others to notice their world views and how they may be interrupting learning? How could I ensure a personal commitment to transformational change in myself and others? How do I keep the optimism high, and trust the thinking?