

# Identity and education: the nature of dynamic social systems

**Pat Lees**

UniSA, School of Education, Magill

Schools are part of an inter-institutional *milieu* which simultaneously helps constitute, and is constituted by, the human identities and relationships of the people involved. Human identities and relationships are constituted in and by social discourses, even as they help shape those discourses, and are in constant flux as they react to and affect the different social worlds in which they exist.

Processes of *feedback* between human identities (beliefs, traits, desires, fears), relationships (between people, places and things), and discourses (personal, public, moral, political, etc.) constitute the dynamic social systems in which we live, work and play. Understanding the diverse, complex, ever-changing, and co-constructed nature of dynamic and inter-related social systems (such as schools, families and communities) is vital to sophisticated, innovative and productive/useful social research, effective and equitable public education (pedagogy and management), and inclusive, socially 'just' policy-making. Some of the challenges and benefits of education research into the psycho-social and sociocultural aspects of modern schooling are discussed in terms of the author's current PhD study examining school reports, grading student achievement, and reporting to parents in two South Australian primary schools.