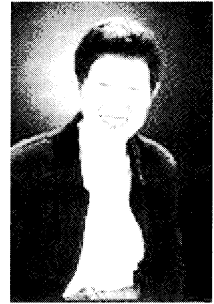


# EDITORIAL



Kia ora koutou

Welcome to the 'new look' *Teachers and Curriculum*. Readers who have subscribed to the journal in previous years will have noticed the new cover design. But there is also another, more significant change - from 2004 *Teachers and Curriculum* will be a refereed journal. Articles submitted for publication in the journal will go through a 'blind' refereeing process. This means that articles, without authors' names or other features that might identify authors, are subject to peer review by at least two people who are knowledgeable in the particular field in which they are written, to decide whether they should be included in the journal or not. The editorial committee has decided that *Teachers and Curriculum* should become a refereed publication, partly in response to the establishment of the performance-based research fund (PBRF). The PBRF was established by the government to recognise and reward research quality in the tertiary education sector by way of funding for research. Because of this scrutiny by others in the field, as part of the decision making about whether to publish particular articles or not, publication in journals that are refereed, is regarded as more significant than in those that are not. Another reason for the decision to become refereed is that we believe that those interested in curriculum and its development welcome discussion, debate and the scrutiny of their ideas against those of others.

To this end, the refereeing process is not an impediment to publication, or a hurdle to be leapt. Rather it is part of this process of testing ideas, amongst peers.

However I must emphasise that the nature and purpose of *Teachers and Curriculum* have not changed. It is timely, in this seventh year of publication, to return to the message of the founding editors, Fred Biddulph and Jeanne Biddulph. In their editorial in the first (1997) issue of *Teachers and Curriculum* they said:

The term 'curriculum' is used here in its broad sense of what happens for learners. It therefore encompasses official documents, interpretations of these, texts and technological aids, classroom interactions, and messages received by students. If you like, it includes policy, practice and learners' constructions. The purposes of the publication are to (i) raise issues to do with curriculum, (ii) present relevant research, and (iii) offer examples of informed curriculum practice. ...It is also likely to contain challenges for curriculum policy makers and curriculum developers at both national and local levels...

Why publish *Teachers and Curriculum*? There are several reasons, as alluded to in the purposes listed above. These include (i) a need to bring curriculum to the forefront in educational debate, (ii) providing an avenue for publishing curriculum-related research, particularly research undertaken by teachers, and (iii) enabling a sharing within the profession of instances of informed curriculum practice, especially that developed by teachers.

The second and third of these reasons probably need no further elaboration... The first reason is perhaps not quite so self evident, and readers may appreciate some explanation of the need to focus educational debate on curriculum...

The school curriculum is not a set of infallible truths handed down from some authority. Rather it is a human construction put together, in the final analysis, by selected 'experts', all teachers and learners. In the past the crucial role-played by teachers has been acknowledged...

In recent ideologically-driven reforms of education, however, serious attempts seem to have been made to de-professionalise teachers with respect to curriculum. Curriculum development at the national level has been privatised (done on contract) and teacher organisations are no longer a recognised partner in the development process... Because the real curriculum is what is finally enacted in the classroom between teacher and students, we believe that excluding teachers from the development process is a serious mistake. Whether education or government officials like it or not, each teacher is a curriculum developer, and many are very competent at it...

In our view, the curriculum does not figure prominently enough in educational debate at present. It does not seem to have the profile of, say, educational management or leadership, policy or assessment, and yet curriculum is at the heart of education. Given this, we think that since the curriculum is constructed by people it should be scrutinised critically on a regular basis to (i) expose any evidence of ideological capture, (ii) ensure that it remains dynamic, (iii) determine whether it reflects the latest educational and other insights, and (iv) examine whether it meets the needs of children and teachers.

It is disappointing that this description of the state of curriculum development and debate, written by Jeanne and Fred in 1997, still largely describes what is happening in 2003.

I hope that *Teachers and Curriculum* will continue to play a part in the analysis, critique, and most importantly the development of curriculum in Aotearoa/New Zealand, in early childhood centres, schools and teacher education institutions. I believe that the 2003 edition, volume 6 of *Teachers and Curriculum*, with its articles on teachers putting curriculum into practice; critiquing teacher education, planning, assessment and reporting; providing examples in particular curriculum areas, and telling personal stories; does just this, and remains true to the original purposes of the journal.

Catherine Lang

Editor 2003