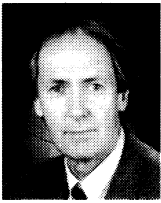


EDITORIAL



Ken Carr

*School of Education
University of Waikato*

Although I am writing this editorial far from New Zealand (in Northumberland, England) the issues to do with schooling and curriculum I read and listen to here are familiar. The concerns that those involved with schooling have with curriculum in England are in many instances very close to those shared by their counterparts in New Zealand. Many would say this is not surprising, given the forces that have held sway in many countries in the nineties - the adoption of fundamentalist economic policies and a market-based economy, moves towards the privatization of many state-owned assets and utilities, and (some might claim) the systematic dismantling of the welfare state where one may have existed. Inevitably these forces have impacted upon schooling with a flow-on to what we consider to be curriculum.

How have these forces affected teachers, children, and the curriculum? Listen to teachers and they will quickly tell you. Many teachers claim that, on the whole, classroom life has become more difficult for them. The introduction of new curricula has remained relentless, teachers feel under greater stress to have their pupils 'achieve' in the various curriculum areas, class sizes have not fallen, the introduction of new curricula has remained relentless, resources for children with special needs remain inadequate, the amount of record-keeping has multiplied, and other issues such as merit payments to 'successful' teachers ('payment by results', where it is proposed to reward English teachers £2,000 if their pupils perform well on tests), continue to distract and divide the teaching profession. To these we can add the politicians repetitive cries that schools must 'drive up standards' and even 'ratchet up standards'.

In spite of all the above, it is reassuring that many people in Education continue to make worthwhile attempts to identify the real issues in curriculum, and make sensible, reasoned and intelligent suggestions and comments for teachers. This current publication contains such efforts.

In reading through the contributions that comprise this edition it is possible to detect several themes that bind the pieces together in an informal and natural manner.

One such theme is the impact of political forces and decisions on curriculum. Ballard makes this point very clearly, and other readings such as those by Dixon, and Salter reflect this. Salter notes how the physical education curriculum is being expanded to address some of the social problems of our society - often as identified by politicians many might claim. Lee and Lee, in their book review, present a thoughtful analysis of the reforms in Education (to complement that presented by the authors' of the book they review), and ask some pertinent questions.

Another uniting theme is that of considering the child as the central concern in curriculum. Both Coe and Pope emphasise this in the context of physical and sport education, and other writers carry this theme on. Biddulph and Carr also reflect this theme as they discuss learning theories, and the influence these have on how we teach and think about children's learning.

Alton-Lee, McNaughton, Flockton, Biddulph and Biddulph, and Locke carry a theme of integrating findings from research to the teaching/assessment processes *per se*. These experienced researchers take important questions and issues for teachers, and provide a balanced review of the implications for classroom practice in terms of what to teach and how to work and interact with learners.

The importance of connecting with the culture and learning styles of the child (and teachers) is a theme inherent in the articles by Muke, Gibbons, and Coleman and Snape. Gibbons provides a treasure-trove of suggestions, and Muke reminds us that cultural concerns must always be part of teaching and learning. Coleman and Snape confront a 'culture' among teachers that they suggest is at odds with our current understandings.

This issue of 'Teachers and Curriculum' reflects the sentiments expressed by Jeanne and Fred Biddulph in the first volume - that we would interpret the word 'curriculum' in it's broadest sense, and that educators and other interested parties maintain a critical approach to curriculum.