

The NZ Curriculum Draft for Consultation

Section A

Q1 n/a

Q2 We are contributing to this consultation as part of a group. Approximately 50 people have had input into this feedback. These people are parents, grandparents, former principals, former teachers, former members of boards of trustees, former teacher educators (pre- service and in-service) and active members of the community.

Section B

Q3 We strongly disagree with all statements. (5)

Comments: This draft curriculum represents a major shift in the educational directions that NZ schools are taking. Since **Tomorrow's Schools** began in 1989, NZ schools have made a great deal of progress in changing attitudes to racism in NZ, particularly in relation to Maori. This draft ignores the Treaty of Waitangi, and has removed all references to biculturalism and multi-culturalism. These aspects of the NZ curriculum have been distinguishing features of curriculum development in the last two decades and have contributed to the understanding and acknowledgement of the increasing diversity of NZ society.

The **Treaty of Waitangi**, as a founding document of New Zealand, needs to be in the Principles on page 9 and Maori concepts and content should be through all learning areas at all levels in recognition of New Zealand's bicultural reality. The inclusion of bicultural concepts and content is needed in recognition of the numbers of Maori students and teachers in mainstream schools. The separate publication of the curriculum for Maori medium is not a substitute.

Schools that are predominately Pakeha will not consult Maori curriculum documents as they will be unable to read them. They need the curriculum to express Maori values in ways that their students can understand. The absence of Maori terms is a retrograde step.

There needs to be an addition to the statement under the **Cultural Heritage** principle on page 9 that all students should have the opportunity to experience a curriculum that reflects and values te ao Maori. We suggest that the words, '*thereby strengthening their identity and belonging as New Zealanders*' be added.

The current draft curriculum shows little understanding of the concept of equity, which is based on equality of outcomes and recognizes that to achieve equality of outcomes, inputs cannot be equal. No mention is made of the needs of students from the Pacific, or of the needs of ESOL students or of students with special needs.

The draft curriculum is unlikely to inform the future direction of NZ school curriculum because it introduces little that is new. It basically rephrases much of the general direction of the existing curriculum, but removes important elements.

The direction for learning is ill-defined and leaves far too much to the discretion of local communities, principals and individual teachers. Some statements are so open-ended that there will be difficulty in achieving any consistency in the development of the curriculum.

Q4 The document is quite easy to read as a whole. However, it is difficult to understand exactly what is intended in many places because so many of the ideas are expressed in long wordy sentences with loose use of vocabulary. (2)

The draft curriculum contains numerous examples of unclear writing, with consequent lack of clarity in meaning. Problems occur with words that:

- shift in meaning in different parts of the draft (eg 'equity' defined in two different ways on pp 9 and 10);
- are new to the curriculum but are introduced without definition (eg 'entrepreneurial', p8);
- are defined by themselves (eg. 'coherence' and 'coherent' on p 9);
- are repeated in slightly different forms, but with different meanings (eg 'connected' on p 8 and 'connections' on p 9);
- are educational jargon and are not defined (eg 'metacognitive' on p 11).

Q5 No positive impact. (3)

The draft curriculum could have considerable negative impact because it does not provide clear direction. The draft has lost, or ignored, or omitted positive aspects of the current curriculum.

Q6 We believe that schools will face major challenges in designing and implementing a curriculum in line with the direction set out in this document. The main challenge that schools will face is identified in the words of this question. Schools should not be asked to 'design a curriculum'. Teachers do not have the time or the expertise for this task.

Teachers will have difficulty in implementing a curriculum in line with this draft, because the draft does not give them enough direction. This draft is not a curriculum. It is simply part of a framework.

Teachers would have to do a great deal of work to make this a workable document, and the results would be very variable across the country, resulting in even more inequity for students depending on which school they went to, in which suburb, or in which part of the country.

If each school was able to specify what to teach in each of the learning areas for each year, the disadvantages to students who move school are obvious. The potential for variation in the design of the curriculum could result in essential knowledge and skills not being taught in state schools, or in the content of the curriculum being unduly influenced by the religious, political, racial, or racist beliefs of a local community.

Teachers' difficulties will include:

- identifying how the key competencies can be taught, monitored and assessed at different curriculum levels;
- deciding on the content to be taught in each learning area;
- assessing progress at each level;
- seeing how to link the national curriculum with NCEA;
- deciding what weight to give to the community voice.

Q7 Quite easy. (2) for all components of this question.

Comment: The section on 'Designing a School Curriculum' is perhaps the most problematic as it is carefully worded so as to give little direction on the extent to which the community should influence the planning of the school curriculum. Neither is it necessarily good practice for school trustees, principals and teachers to be given responsibility for planning the curriculum, as noted above in this response. Curriculum design for state schools is the responsibility of the Government and

should be delegated to experts, not left to local communities. The opening paragraphs on p26 have the potential to cause significant disparities between the educational opportunities available to children in different communities and localities.

There should be a clear **national** curriculum, with communities having input into local curriculum, but unable to touch the rights of all children to a sound, if not excellent, education in all curriculum areas. In our view, p26 is loosely worded and reflects woolly thinking, which if not corrected, will have potentially damaging effects on our children's education.

We suggest that the words '*and respect for all living things*' are added to the sentence on *respect*, under the heading, 'Values', on p10.

Q8 All are quite useful, (2) except for 'Designing a school curriculum' which is not very useful. (3)

Comment: See above for comment on 'Designing a school curriculum'.

The vision, principles and values have a certain degree of overlap and repetition and perhaps could be refined further. The section on 'Principles' shows confusion with 'Values' as almost identical definitions are used for each. These sections read like 'motherhood and apple pie' and no-one would disagree with them, except perhaps to wonder how teachers would teach 'entrepreneurialism' and how well they are equipped to teach it.

However, the main objection to these sections is not what they say, but what they do *not* say, that is, in relation to biculturalism in NZ, the needs of students from other races and ethnicities, including the Pacific, and children with special education needs.

We believe that **Sustainability** education needs to be included as a principle of its own on page 9 so that all students learn to make sound decisions to protect the environment and become responsible and active global citizens. The principle of sustainability should be clearly articulated and demonstrated throughout all areas of the curriculum.

Another key competency called "**Living sustainably**" needs to be added on p11. Living sustainably encompasses the values of social justice, peace, human rights and equitable sharing of resources across the world. Students need to develop competency in this area by thinking holistically and creatively to find solutions for a sustainable world.

Section C

Q9 English. Overall, this (p15 of the Draft Curriculum) is a well put together statement about English, but it does not offer anything new. (2)

Comments: Good to see that students are to be encouraged to *enjoy* English language and literature. Also good to see in the opening paragraph that the importance of English is recognised, both as a study in itself and as a key to learning in all areas.

The description of English is well balanced, and in fact, closely resembles the current English curriculum. The structure has been simplified into two strands, which is good, but basically retains the strands of the current curriculum. The draft in fact reflects much earlier divisions of the English curriculum, and of all language teaching, into productive and receptive.

The balance of literature and language is appropriate, as is the emphasis on processes, such as thinking, both 'deeply' and 'critically'. Perhaps a link to the competencies would be useful here. Good to see that the draft recognises the need for students to

engage with texts at levels that are increasingly challenging and sophisticated and of increasing depth.

We believe that the teaching and learning of **Home Economics** should be given a greater priority in the **Health and Physical Education and Technology** curriculum statements, particularly in relation to the teaching of Food and Nutrition. Food and Nutrition was formerly included in the national curriculum, and in our view, remains of prime importance, given national and international concerns about increasing rates of obesity and allied illnesses. Discussion of these issues is not enough. NZ students need realistic, practical experiences to learn skills of selecting, storing, preparing, cooking and serving food to help equip them to lead healthy lifestyles.

We consider that the description of the **mathematics** curriculum as presented in the draft curriculum is an excellent framework for teachers **(1)**. We are concerned that allowing schools the freedom to design their own curriculum could result in teaching that lacks coherence and connectedness, as curriculum design needs to be done by experts. We are concerned that some teachers could simply omit to teach parts of the mathematics curriculum that they themselves find difficult.

We consider that the description of the **Health and Physical Education** curriculum, (p16) accurately captures the essence of this learning area.

Q10 English. In some cases. (3)

Comments: It is difficult to get an overview of the English curriculum, and of the progression in learning, because of the layout of the achievement levels. Suggest that as well as printing all the achievement objectives for each level together, all the levels for each curriculum area are also printed together. (ie vertically as well as horizontally.)

The achievement objectives provide only a sketchy guide to what should be taught and need to be supported by more detailed documents to give teachers guidance. This guidance is needed for beginning teachers, who would be completely lost if provided with only these achievement objectives to teach by. It is also needed for teachers with a few years' experience to ensure that they do not decide to abandon areas that do not interest them, or that they find difficult to teach, and for older teachers, to ensure that they keep up with changes in emphasis.

We believe that in every learning area of the draft curriculum the achievement objectives are too general to be useful to teachers and students. They do not provide teachers with enough guidance to know the areas of knowledge and skills that they should cover, or to enable them to structure their programmes in a coherent progression of learning.

In the **Health and Physical Education** curriculum, the strands are similar to the current curriculum, but the examples have been eliminated. The result will be that schools will have to interpret the achievement objectives themselves, without guidance or suggestions. Examples are needed to give teachers clear direction. How are students to be taught the skills of conflict resolution from a young age?

General comment

We believe that it is essential that schools are provided with guidance to ensure that they do not, with their communities, decide to leave out areas of the curriculum, or to give so much weighting and time to some areas that they have no time for other areas.

We are concerned that there is nothing in this draft that appears to be mandatory, and that therefore schools and communities are free to decide for themselves what to teach. We believe that this freedom may deprive children of their right to access a good education, no matter where they live in NZ?

How will coverage and the quality of teaching of the curriculum be monitored if schools are free to design their own curriculum?

We believe that the draft curriculum should show links to NCEA and should give clearer guidance on strategies for assessment at every level.

We are concerned that the draft curriculum does not appear to highlight or address the major issues that are confronting us in the 21st century. For example, where is the awareness of the need to protect the planet from the effects of global warming, religious and racial intolerance, war, mismanagement of and unequal access to resources?

We believe that the draft curriculum in its current form:

- puts too much responsibility on schools and communities to design their own curriculum and does not define the extent of this responsibility;
- does not guarantee the rights of children to a balanced education, irrespective of where they live;
- does not address the learning needs of Maori, Pacific, and other ethnic groups living in New Zealand;
- does not address the learning needs of students with disabilities;
- does not take sufficient cognisance of the major issues of the 21st century.

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on behalf of the North Shore Branch of the NZ Federation of Graduate Women