

# Consideration of Submissions and Questionnaire Responses on the Draft New Zealand Curriculum

Paper Prepared for the Ministry of Education

Lester Flockton  
University of Otago  
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## SECTION 1

### Introduction

This paper identifies and considers significant issues raised in public responses to the Draft New Zealand Curriculum. The Ministry of Education commissioned **Lift Education** to analyse written submissions of three or more pages in length. These were defined as “long submissions”, of which 174 were analysed. **Colmar Brunton** was engaged to analyse the “short submissions”, which were three pages or less, and submitted on the questionnaire that accompanied the draft curriculum (hard copy and online). A total of 9117 short submissions were analysed. It was not the role of either Lift Education or Colmar Brunton to provide accounts of the implications of submissions for the New Zealand Curriculum. Their work mainly involved assembling, ordering and summing responses within various themes and categories. In addition to Lift Education’s and Colmar Brunton’s analyses of submissions, two further studies of the draft curriculum were commissioned by the Ministry of Education. These were conducted by Sue Ferguson for the **Australian Council for Educational Research**, and Joanna Le Metais of **Le Metais Consulting**. Sue Ferguson’s paper illustrates some interesting consistencies between the draft curriculum and Australian curricula. Joanna Le Metais’ critique is highly expert in its analysis and advice, and offers valuable substance for strengthening the curriculum document. Her suggestions are not repeated in this paper. The purpose of this paper is to reflect a deeper analysis of the information available within the Lift Education and Colmar Brunton reports to establish issues that warrant consideration for changes to the draft New Zealand Curriculum.

It is expected that this paper will propose specific changes in relation to “significant” issues, to the format, structure and content of the Draft New Zealand curriculum, and highlight any implications for school-based implementation of those changes, as well as implications for teaching and learning. This expectation was made before the reported results of the consultations were available, and thus there was an assumption that there would be sufficient evidence to support and warrant such proposals. In the event, the

consultations have resulted in strong support for much of the draft document. This paper identifies five main issues warranting consideration from the 9117 short submissions analysed by Colmar Brunton. Only one of those issues (concerning the achievement objectives) could require some major changes. There are a number of identifiable themes in the Lift Education report (Treaty of Waitangi, individualism, economism, sustainability, standards, etc.), yet they bear more upon considerations of particular wording and elements of content rather than on the structure and direction of the document.

Many of the issues in this report are entwined in political/social/cultural issues, many represent advocacy for submitter mission, a number take viewpoints that may not be shared by wider constituencies of educational interest, and some go beyond the scope of a national curriculum. This is to be expected. As Adams et al (2000) observe, "The curriculum is a site of political struggle between contending forces" (p.162).

Curriculum is a cultural product or process of social contexts, social practices, and social interactions. Curriculum cannot be separated from society or viewed as some 'neutral' body of knowledge that transcends time and space. As McCulloch (1992) points out, curriculum is an expression of the culture and politics of a society, and also 'constitutes potentially an important source for understanding the more general structures of and relationships in society as a whole.

Adams, P., Clark, J., Codd, J., O'Neill, A., Openshaw, R., Waitere-Ang, H. (2000),  
Education and Society in Aotearoa New Zealand, Dunmore Press: Palmerston  
North. p.162

Among all of the submissions there is much worthy thought and genuine concern for the education and well being of young New Zealanders. The fact that a number of the submissions are unlikely to result in direct changes to the draft document should not be taken to mean that they are not understood and valued.

## **Submissions in the context of the development of the Draft New Zealand Curriculum**

There were two significant features that underpinned the development of the draft: cabinet authorisation and professional collaboration. Cabinet authorisation for the scope of the review and changes to the New Zealand Curriculum derived from the Curriculum Stocktake (2003) recommendations. Cabinet authorisation set the scope, and by implication certain boundaries, around the extent to which the Ministry of Education could reconstruct the national curriculum (see fig. 1). It did not allow *carte blanche*. This is not always known or understood by many who would offer comment or advice on the draft, and indeed the Reference Group itself had to be reminded of the terms of reference from time to time. So not all who made submissions would be sufficiently aware of the potential constraints around the modelling of the curriculum, although as it turns out

there were very few submissions that could not be accommodated within the necessary provisions.

**New Zealand Curriculum Project**  
*Ministry of Education NZCP Working Papers 3/05*

The goals of the curriculum project are:

1. To clarify and refine curriculum outcomes
2. To focus on quality teaching
3. To strengthen school ownership of curriculum
4. To support communication and strengthen partnerships with parents and communities.

A second significant feature that underpinned the development of the draft was the extensive involvement of those in the education sector. More than 15,000 students, teachers, principals, advisers, and academics contributed to developing the draft, building on recommendations from the *New Zealand Curriculum Stocktake Report (2003; [http://www.tik.org.nz/r/nzcurriculum/draft-curriculum/index\\_e.php](http://www.tik.org.nz/r/nzcurriculum/draft-curriculum/index_e.php))*. When this level of collaborative co-construction is put alongside the total of 9285 submissions analysed by LIFT Education and Colmar Brunton, it can be appreciated that the knowledge, experience and different perspectives of a considerable constituency of interest had already been infused into the document. It would be reasonable to expect, therefore, that the final production of the draft would meet with much identification and support, particularly since the process appeared true to its commitment, and that this would be reflected in evaluative responses to the draft.

### **Significant Issues**

The intention of this paper is to identify and offer consideration of significant issues that can be identified from the Lift Education and Colmar Brunton reports, which should be addressed in revisions to the draft curriculum document. Recognising that there are varying degrees of significance (highly significant, moderately significant) it is necessary to clarify the basis for determining whether an issue does warrant consideration. Clearly, when a majority of submissions (greater than 50 percent) express concern, dissatisfaction or lack of support, then there is a good case for consideration. But a simple majority in itself is not a sufficient basis. For example, when all but one area in a category (such as learning area achievement objectives) are given strong support by respondents, then the outlier with a much reduced support requires consideration. Moreover, since a major goal for the development of the New Zealand curriculum is to produce a high quality, thoroughly reasoned, future directed and widely supported framework for teaching and learning, account also needs to be taken of submissions that could contribute to this end, regardless

of the number of those submissions. The basis upon which weightings are given to submissions, therefore, is not simply a matter of number of volume.

A broad overview of the two submission reports shows that there are very few aspects of the draft curriculum for which there is not an overall majority support. Yet there are some interesting variances in patterns of support within overall majorities. These are seen, for example, in a number of primary compared to secondary responses. These deserve consideration. There are also instances of positive/negative judgements that cancel each other out. For example:

*Some terminology difficult to understand/use of jargon confusing/some parts too wordy: **Total Responses 5%***

*Easy to understand/Clear Terminology/Concise: **Total Responses 5%***

(Arts Comments, CB Report, p.42)

Some submissions are significant for the *implementation* of the curriculum, but are not necessarily significant for the curriculum per se. Concerns about adequate resourcing, for example, signal *implications* for the effective implementation of the curriculum. Provided that what the curriculum proposes is not beyond confidence for reasonable expectations for sufficient resourcing for implementation, then this is perhaps not an issue for the framing of the curriculum document itself. The effective implementation of *Learning Languages* area is one where effective implementation undoubtedly depends on appropriate resourcing, but since this area has the support of Government, then Government is duty bound to provide the needed support.

The matter of the national curriculum's purpose and intended audiences needs to be understood when deliberating issues raised in submissions. For some, the document is seen as not detailed enough and lacks "how to" instructions. There is, however, an important distinction between a document that sets out particular directions for teaching and learning, and one that provides more detailed guidance and information on how to transact those intentions into good practice. Arguably, the latter is not a direct function of a national curriculum document, yet it is reasonable to expect that supporting material would follow on from the document. Consequently, concerns of this type are not treated as significant issues requiring consideration for the revision of the document.

The multiple audiences to whom the curriculum should be addressed are wider than those who are expected to implement it and those who provide training in its implementation. Thus, the document should be capable of giving meaning to the widest possible audiences of interest in Aotearoa/New Zealand. This is fundamental to encouraging necessary partnerships for effective education.

*The audience for this document is all those who have interest in the education and future well-being of our young people.*

*Foreword, draft curriculum. P.5*

Finally, some issues arising from the consultations centre around the choice, use and phrasing of particular words. Educational discourse is particularly expert in the entanglement of verbiage. Clearly (note), the language used in the national curriculum needs to avoid jargon, technicism and fashion, yet it also needs to ensure the integrity of meaning and the absence of ambiguity. This is an area that forever elicits comment and counter-comment. It is substantially an editorial responsibility, and one that falls largely outside the scope of this paper.

Dwight Bolinger, in his book *Aspects of Language*, describes language as being rather like a pair of spectacles through which we view the world. The problem is, of course, that these particular specs are not made of clear glass. The lenses that stand between us and the world are well and truly coloured by the tinges and tints of our predilections and prejudices. Moreover, these tinges and tints are what help to support and maintain the predilections and prejudices – the ‘motes’ and ‘beams’ of our eyes, if you like. *Burridge, K. (1994). Weeds in the Garden or Words. Sydney: ABC Books: p.194*

## SECTION 2

### Colmar Brunton Report

This report summarises responses to 27 statements within 8 major questions given in the feedback questionnaire that accompanied the draft curriculum. Three to five point rating scales were provided for each statement (e.g. major, moderate, minor; very useful, quite useful, not very useful, not useful at all; strongly disagree, disagree, neither/nor, agree, strongly agree), and space was provided for comments. Percentage summaries of both ratings and comment types are provided in the report.

The most striking impression from the feedback is that the majority of questions/statements were given high ratings of satisfaction. Confidence in the strength of this result is twofold: it derives from a substantial national (self-selected) sample, and there is general consistency of responses among contributor, decile and school types with a few noteworthy exceptions.

Overall Support by Contributor Type	
Q3: Intent and direction	68%*
Q4: Overall clarity	77%
Q5: Likely Impact	86%
Q6: Implementation challenges	52%
Q7: Clarity of each part	83%
Q8: Usefulness of each part	77%
Q9: Eight learning area descriptions	85%

\* *The direction for learning set out in this document is just what NZ students need: 49%*

\*\* *Technology outcomes: 53%*

Five main considerations from the Comar Brunton report are identified:

**Consideration 1:** ‘the **direction for learning** set out in the document is just what New Zealand students need’

**Consideration 2:** **designing a school curriculum and implementation challenges**

**Consideration 3:** in all learning areas secondary teachers are less likely than primary teachers to agree that the **learning area descriptions** are accurate, especially for Science, Technology and Learning Languages.

**Consideration 4:** agreement on the usefulness of the **statements of outcomes** (achievement objectives) was very acceptable in most areas, although it was noticeably lower in Learning Languages (68%) and Technology (53%).

**Consideration 5:** Large proportions of **secondary teachers** don’t think the learning objectives are useful for Technology (66%), Science (58%), Mathematics (45%), Social Sciences (45%), Learning Languages (49%).

### **Consideration 1: ‘the direction for learning set out in the document is just what New Zealand students need’**

Overall, the majority of questionnaire respondents (51%) disagree or are unsure that the document sets out a direction for learning that is just what New Zealand students need. The main objection is that it is too vague, open to interpretation, and doesn’t specify what is compulsory. There are concerns that it will lead to inconsistencies between and within schools. Some would like to see identification of standards and specification of what is compulsory to teach. (See discussion on issue 2 below.)

Somewhat counter to the negative reactions, there was strong support across the sector to question 5, “Likely impact”. There is a certain confusing inconsistency here, and unfortunately we have limited information about what respondents believe New Zealand students need. Accordingly, without further investigation, this is not a matter that can be readily resolved. Confidence, nonetheless, can be taken from the high support given to the majority of the sections in the draft, including vision, principles, values, key competencies. This could be interpreted to mean, ‘just what New Zealand students need’!

### **Recommendation 1**

*No action required in respect of the draft document.*

### **Consideration 2: Designing a school curriculum, and implementation challenges**

In responses to question 8 on the 'Usefulness of each part', there was strong support for vision, principles, values, key competencies, effective pedagogy and, to a lesser extent, designing a school curriculum. Over 20 percent said that the part on designing a curriculum was not very useful (about one third of secondary teachers believed this). While there were positive comments that were affirming of the section, negative responses claimed vagueness, lack of detail, and need for clarification, examples and professional development.

A consideration of responses across related aspects suggests that issues of design could be connected to issues such as statements of outcomes, uncertainty about what might become mandatory, and levels of discretion that will be allowed in local decision making and curriculum design. As the draft stands, there is scope for an underlying tension between prescription and flexibility. While the document says "each school will design and implement its own curriculum in ways that will engage and motivate its particular students", and "Schools have considerable freedom in deciding exactly how to do this" (p.26), it is not crystal clear just how much freedom schools will actually have in shaping their own curriculum around the New Zealand curriculum.

It is understandable that schools have become wary (distrustful, even) of curriculum promise when it can be open to different interpretations at different levels of the system. This was sorely experienced by many during the era when the Education Review Office stamped its particular interpretations and authority on "legal obligations" (e.g., schools must teach and assess *all* of the achievement objectives in *all* curriculum areas). This was despite guidance given in statements such as the New Curriculum Framework (1993):

The NZ curriculum provides for flexibility, enabling schools and teachers to design programmes which are appropriate to learning needs of their students. The school curriculum will be sufficiently flexible to **respond to each student's learning needs**, to new understanding of the different ways in which people learn, to changing social and economic conditions, to national needs, and to the requirements and **expectations of local communities**. (p.7)

In numerous cases ERO's interpretations were at variance with schools' interpretations, regardless of how sensible schools' approaches were. But ERO prevailed. It is most important that revised curricula requirements eliminate a repetition of such confusions and tensions. This is particularly important if schools are to commit to genuine ownership at the local level, which is one of the official goals of the curriculum revision.

Past experience suggests that the causation for much of the confusion and inconsistency in interpretations of requirements of schools has resided in a lack of congruence between what National Education Guidelines say and what the curriculum says and aspires to. The motivations behind the two statements can be at odds with a resulting disservice to schools.

A further key issue that arises from submissions on the draft relates to claims that flexibility and non-prescription of standards will lead to lowering of standards and inconsistencies among schools. However, there is little evidence to support such problematic claims, claims that keep company with many of education's other mythologies.

No firm research-based conclusions can be given as to whether curriculum should be mandated or placed more in the hands of teachers. Curriculum is interpreted at different levels and therefore it becomes difficult to understand the relationship between curriculum and student achievement in the absence of detail about what happens in the classroom. A further complexity arises since curriculum reform often occurs at the same time as assessment or other reforms. This makes it difficult to discover any causal relationship between variables of curriculum and student achievement.

There is some form of national standards in most countries but little research to understand the impact of these. No country is satisfied with its curricula, even those who achieve well in international IEA type studies. There is no clear evidence that the existence or absence of nationally mandated curricula led to improved performance. ... We know very little about what occurs in classrooms as a result of particular curriculum structures. This is a significant research gap internationally. p.26

*The Effects of Curricula and Assessment on Pedagogical Approaches and on Educational Outcomes*  
[http://www.minedu.govt.nz/print\\_doc.cfm?layout=document&documentid=5610&indexid=5879&indexparentid=5871&fromprint=y](http://www.minedu.govt.nz/print_doc.cfm?layout=document&documentid=5610&indexid=5879&indexparentid=5871&fromprint=y)

A large percentage of respondents believe that there will be challenges to schools as they design and implement the curriculum (almost half of secondary and tertiary respondents anticipating major challenges). Concerns relate to adequate resourcing, constraints of NCEA and the willingness of teachers to change if adequate resources are not available. While such concerns have some validity, they do not detract from or necessarily relate to the quality and acceptability of document and its direction (which is the major focus on this paper). Schools are entitled to expect adequate resourcing to implement the State's curriculum, and the State is clearly obligated to provide sufficient support. But schools themselves are also capable of their own resourcefulness in matters of curriculum design provided they are not unduly deterred in the process, provided they have access to a range of effective models and provided they are given encouragement.

Alignment between the national curriculum and NCEA warrants consideration. The curriculum spans Year 1 to Year 13, yet from Year 10 onwards NCEA largely determines the taught and experienced curriculum. That is, NCEA becomes the curriculum, ipso facto. So what should be the nature of the connection between national curriculum and NCEA? In some respects this is not a difficult question if it is accepted that the National Curriculum provides *broad* and somewhat inclusive definitions of expected knowledge, concepts and skills. At the senior secondary school, curriculum studies and options branch out beyond the national curriculum framework, and students' selections of courses do not generally embrace all or most curriculum areas. Yet linkages are still possible. Arguably, NCEA specification of unit standards and achievement standards should be capable of being linked to appropriate national curriculum objectives. An issue, then, is whether schools should be expected to formally demonstrate such connections. It is reasonable to expect that this should be attended to, but only at the stage of design and prescription of individual NCEA course standards. It should be sufficient for formal linkages to rest there, and the nature of the relationship should be spelled out in the curriculum document to avoid uncertainty.

### Recommendation 2

*That the curriculum statement on flexibility in designing school level curricula be strengthened so that it avoids ambiguity, misinterpretation or misrepresentation. The statement should address all key components of the curriculum, and it should be written in a manner that avoids any subsequent confusions, contradictions or usurping in National Education Guidelines.*

**Consideration 3: Learning Area Descriptions – Secondary Teachers: in all learning areas secondary teachers are less likely than primary teachers to agree that the learning area descriptions are accurate, especially for Science, Technology and Learning Languages.**

Overall there is a high level of agreement that individual learning areas are described accurately. However, there is a significant number of secondary teachers who don't agree with the descriptions. Overall, 44% don't agree with the description of technology, 34% with science and 31% with learning languages.

The issue here is that around a third or more of secondary teachers have reservations in given areas – a substantial number. The problem here is that we don't know what it is about the statements that makes them deficient in their view. Some confidence can be taken from the fact that many more secondary teachers do not share such concerns. Nonetheless, there is an issue here that

needs to be further investigated, understood and addressed, but most appropriately in teacher development provided to support the implementation of the revised curriculum.

### **Recommendation 3**

*No action with respect to the design and content of the draft document.*

**Consideration 4: Achievement Objectives: agreement on the usefulness of the statements of outcomes (achievement objectives) was very acceptable in most areas, although it was noticeably lower in Learning Languages (68%) and Technology (53%).**

Respondents' acceptance of the achievement objectives is largely uncritical. Most like the fold out arrangement of the pages and the one-view presentation of all areas and objectives for each particular level. The layout might have given the illusion of a much reduced number of objectives, yet when comparisons are made with the current curriculum it is seen that numbers of objectives are still quite substantial, and in some areas there is very little difference.

## Numbers of Achievement Objectives Levels 1 - 4

	Current NZC AOs (+Achvmt.Aims)	Draft NZC AOs (+Aims)	Draft NZC Strands
English	44 (+18 proc)	40	2
Learning Languages	0	28	3
Social Sciences	40 (+10 AAs)	26 ←	5
Science	29 (+17 AAs)	32 (+16 AAs)	5
Technology	52	32	3
Maths & Statistics	118	63 ←	3
Arts	48	59	4
Health & PE	69	53 ←	4
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>400</b> <b>(+45 AAs &amp; Ps)</b>	<b>333</b> <b>(+ 31 AAs)</b>	<b>28</b>

*numbers subject to final check*

It is not clear whether readers have accepted the achievement objectives at face value, or whether they have analysed their usefulness for making judgements about students' achievement status at successive levels. The latter seems improbable. Regardless, such scrutiny is essential if the document is to address some of the weaknesses of the current curriculum. Since the achievement levels and objectives have been retained in the curriculum design, it is important that they serve their intended purposes. Those purposes include helping to monitor and report the student's learning and progress, identifying needs and guiding teaching and learning. The curriculum levels assume incremental progress and advancement in knowledge and skills. If they are to be helpful to teachers and others for deciding and knowing a student's progress and achievement status, they need to allow reasonably clear distinctions from one level to the next; that is, distinctions that assist teachers to make dependable determinations. Moreover, the individual objectives should be capable of communicating the standard on its own feet without the need for attending to detailed supplementary descriptors, indicators or documents. The magnitude of the challenge to achieve this is not underestimated:

The area of progression is one of the least understood areas, yet this is crucial for designing curriculum and enhancing student achievement.

*The Effects of Curricula and Assessment on Pedagogical Approaches and on Educational Outcomes (ibid), p.26*

The following examples (which could equally be drawn from other curriculum areas) illustrate that the re-drafted achievement objectives remain problematic in

relation to their function as 'level' achievement descriptors. Many distinctions use semantic incrementalism rather than substantive discriminators. Such concerns are reflected in issues raised in the Lift Education Report (cf.p.125),

DRAFT NEW ZEALAND CURRICULUM 2006

English

Speaking, Writing, Presenting Strand

Language Features Broad Objective

- L1 Use language features, showing an understanding of their effect on text meaning and impact.
- L2 Use language features **appropriately**, showing **a developing** understanding of their effect.
- L3 Use language features appropriately, showing an understanding of their effect.
- L4 Use **a range of** language features appropriately, showing an understanding **and appreciation** of their effect.

DRAFT NEW ZEALAND CURRICULUM 2006

English

Speaking, Writing, Presenting Strand

Language Features 1<sup>st</sup> Sub-Objective

- L1: Uses a range of high frequency and personal content words
- L2: Uses a **large and increasing bank** of high frequency words, **topic specific words, and personal content words**.
- L3: Uses an increasing vocabulary **to create meaning**.
- L4: Uses an increasing vocabulary to create precise meaning.

DRAFT NEW ZEALAND CURRICULUM 2006

HEALTH

Strand 1: Personal Health & Physical Education

Objective 2: Regular physical activity

- L1: Participate in **creative and regular physical activities** and identify enjoyable experiences.
- L2: Experience **creative, regular, and enjoyable physical activities** and describe the benefits to well-being.
- L3: Maintain regular participation in **enjoyable physical activities** in a range of environments and describe how these assist in the promotion of well-being.
- L4: Demonstrate an increasing sense of responsibility for incorporating **regular and enjoyable physical activity** into their personal lifestyle to enhance well-being.

VISUAL ARTS

**Strand 2: Developing Practical Knowledge**

- L1: Explore elements and principles and discover ways of using a variety of materials and tools.
- L2: Identify and explore elements and principles using a variety of materials and processes.
- L3: Apply knowledge of elements and principles and a variety of materials and processes to explore some art making conventions.
- L4: Apply knowledge of a variety of materials and processes and use art-making conventions.

Achievement objectives in the two areas that were less well supported, Learning Languages and Technology, warrant consideration. Learning Languages is a new school-wide learning area. As such, it is bound to evoke a range of epistemological and implementation responses despite the fact that the statements have been very thoughtfully and skilfully developed. The acceptance level (68%) gives confidence that what is proposed is on track. It is to be expected that as experienced is deepened in implementation, so too will understandings emerge that could lead to subsequent revisions and refinements.

Technology is clearly problematic and requires further consideration by those responsible for this section of the curriculum.

**Recommendation 4**

*i. Carry out an audit on all draft achievement objectives across successive levels to evaluate their usefulness for helping teachers to determine and make dependable judgements about students' levels of achievement.*

*ii. Revise those achievement objectives that do not meet audit criteria so that they are useful for helping teachers to determine and make dependable judgements about students' levels of achievement.*

**Consideration 5: Achievement Objectives - Secondary Teachers: large proportions of secondary teachers don't think the learning objectives are useful for Technology (66%), Science (58%), Mathematics (45%), Social Sciences (45%), Learning Languages (49%).**

There is limited information to advise the actual nature of dissatisfaction among so many secondary teachers with the learning objectives in five of the eight learning areas. The summaries of comments provided in the Colmar Brunton report give few clues beyond some teachers thinking that the objectives are too broad/too wordy/too vague (Learning Languages 14%, Mathematics and

Statistics 15%, Science 20%, Social Sciences 9%, Technology 12%). Even so, these proportions are small. Regardless, the proportions who don't think that the objectives are useful are high enough to warrant consideration, even if it is speculative. One speculation is that many secondary teachers are strongly focused on course completion and examination requirements, and in order to do their best for their students they need to be quite clear themselves about success criteria. The paradigm for the national curriculum is not perceived by many to be well aligned to that of qualifications frameworks. But this is to misunderstand the purpose and function of the national curriculum and the achievement objectives. Certainly there is no evidence to warrant revision of the achievement objectives on the basis of these concerns if this speculation is valid.

### **Recommendation 5**

*Explain the purpose and function of the national curriculum in the document, and in that explanation clarify the connections between the national curriculum and senior secondary curricula, particularly with reference to NCEA.*

## SECTION 3

### Lift Education Report (Long Submissions)

The Lift Education report presents an analysis of 168 'long submissions' (3 or more pages). It is divided into two sections: Draft Report (149 pages) and Draft Supplementary Report (109 pages). Of the total submissions, 102 came from the education sector, 2 from Maori organisations, and 64 from organisations, agencies and private individuals outside of the education sector. Most submissions commented on multiple aspects of the draft document, with a total categorisation of 1,222 comments distributed across 38 aspects of the curriculum. The aspects commented on the most were the Key Competencies, followed by Values, Principles and Vision. The theme most commented on was the Treaty of Waitangi. Overall, the aspects that were commented on least were the Achievement Objectives.

The report is structured around a series of themes, and within each theme positive aspects along with submitters' concerns and recommendations are catalogued. The report does not assign weightings to the usefulness or relative importance of any of the submissions. That is left to the reader along with sensitivities to bias – own and others. Accordingly, it is to be expected that different reviewers of the written submissions might treat them differently. Numerous statements included in the Lift Education Report fall outside of the purpose of this paper. Many are about implications for implementation and policy. Many do not fairly represent or interpret what is written in the draft document.

This paper draws out 12 significant issues from the report for consideration and recommends, where appropriate, how each should be addressed. Considerations already covered in Section 2 are not generally revisited in this section. To assist with references to this paper, the numbering of considerations continues on from Section 2.

**Consideration 6: Purpose and Function of the National Curriculum**

**Consideration 7: The Treaty of Waitangi**

**Consideration 8: Outcomes Focus**

**Consideration 9: Sustainability (Environmental and other)**

**Consideration 10: A Vision**

**Consideration 11: Principles**

**Consideration 12: Values**

**Consideration 13: Key Competencies**

**Consideration 14: Learning Area Descriptions**

**Consideration 15: Planning for the Development of the Key Competencies**

**Consideration 16: Planning for Purposeful Assessment**

**Consideration 17: Planning for Coherent Pathway**

## **Consideration 6: Purpose and Function of the National Curriculum**

Potential for confusion or inappropriate expectations of the national curriculum arise when there is no clearly explicit statement of its purpose, function *and* scope.

Within the education sector there are differing ideas about the purposes of a curriculum document. In the draft curriculum there is no clarification of why this is an important document, and what its purpose is.  
NZCER 78, p.2 (LE Report p.15)

In any public consultation exercise, there will invariably be submissions that do not fall within the scope of the intended purpose of the matter under consideration. This can be because the scope may not be well understood, or not communicated effectively from the outset. Some submissions on the draft document fall into this category. This aside, it is important that purpose, function and scope are formally stated in the revised document to help avoid the perpetuation of ongoing misrepresentations and inappropriate expectations.

The Secretary of Education's foreword to the draft states:

The New Zealand Curriculum sets national directions for education. It is expected that when schools develop their programmes, they will interpret these directions in ways that take account of the diverse learning needs of their students and the expectations of their communities. p.3

While this statement hints at purpose, it is not enough. Moreover, such a statement should stand on its own, and not be embedded in an official's foreword.

### **Recommendation 6**

*Give a clear statement of the purpose, function and scope of the National Curriculum in the body of document as a section within its own right, rather than embedded in a foreword or introduction.*

## **Consideration 7: The Treaty of Waitangi**

A total of 66 submissions commented on a lack of reference to the Treaty of Waitangi and associated issues (te reo Maori, biculturalism, etc.). There are two dimensions for consideration: knowledge *about* the Treaty as our nation's founding document, and the inclusion of Treaty obligations within the curriculum.

Consideration of knowledge about the Treaty refers to whether it (and related matters) should be explicitly taught and learned.

I believe all of these (Treaty of Waitangi, Te Reo Maori, Tikanga Maori, the history of Aotearoa New Zealand from both Maori and Pakeha perspectives) should be included ... alongside all other subjects and subject matter currently included in the Draft Curriculum ...

(Private Individual 121) p.19

Public surveys conducted from time to time suggest that support for such a requirement may not be widespread. As a nation we are somewhat divided, even among our political leaders. Nonetheless, there is an argument for all New Zealanders to be knowledgeable of the foundations of our nation's heritage and its continuing relevance. This is relevant to the content of the Social Sciences learning area, where learning about the Treaty is specifically provided for in the Level 5 social inquiry achievement objectives:

Through this process, and in a range of settings, students understand that:

- the Treaty of Waitangi is responded to differently by people in different times and places;

This objective only goes part way to satisfying the concerns of submitters.

A second dimension for consideration is the extent to which the State's obligations under the terms of the Treaty are recognised and addressed in the delivery of education, and thus addressed in the national curriculum. It is arguable that contents of draft document, while appropriately inclusive, do in fact address the intent of the Treaty. Because they are not referenced directly or specifically to the Treaty by name (they are broadly inclusive), this does not diminish their relevance and integrity in addressing Treaty obligations. There is much in the document that should be interpreted and associated, directly and indirectly, with the scope of Treaty obligations *as they apply to education*. Examples:

***A Vision*** - 'Positive in their own identity'.

***Principles*** - 'All students experience a curriculum that reflects New Zealand's bicultural heritage. Students who identify as Maori have the opportunity to experience a curriculum that reflects and values te ao Maori.'

***Values*** - all are consistent with Treaty obligations

***Health Education*** - Four interdependent concepts are at the heart of this learning area: (including) Hauora - a Maori philosophy of well-being that includes the dimensions taha wairua (spirituality), taha hinengaro (mind, heart, intellect), taha tinana (body) and taha whanau (extended family),, each one influencing and supporting the others. (p.16)

A number of submissions are categorical in their desire for explicit stipulations within the national curriculum that are directed at obligations towards the Treaty, and particular interpretations of those obligations. There would be serious dangers in doing this since the Education Act already sets requirements. Those requirements cannot be usurped by the

curriculum. The curriculum, by definition, sits beneath the law. The Education Act (1989) makes stipulations that inescapably impact on a school's curriculum.

**Section 61: School Charter**

**(3) A school charter must contain the following sections:**

(a) A section that includes:

- (i) the aim of developing, for the school, policies and practices that reflect New Zealand's cultural diversity and the unique position of the Maori culture; and
- (ii) the aim of ensuring that all reasonable steps are taken to provide instruction in tikanga Maori (Maori culture) and te reo Maori (Maori language) for full-time students whose parents ask for it:

**Recommendation 7**

*i. Include a statement in the introductory section of the document which states, in effect, that the National Curriculum recognises and upholds Treaty of Waitangi obligations as they relate to teaching and learning, and although these are not separated out, they are nonetheless infused throughout the document.*

*ii. Consider including Maori kupu alongside the titles of all parts of the curriculum, including the learning areas.*

*iii. Consider the merits of further attention to knowledge about the Treaty in the Social Sciences learning area.*

**Consideration 8: Outcomes Focus**

Concern is expressed by some that the curriculum emphasises an outcomes based education. For example:

The PPTA considers that the current emphasis on outcomes-based education, as reflected in both the 1990's curriculum and in this document, is a paradigm shift that has gone too far. There is still a need for the education system to recognise that the processes of teaching and learning are critical to the success of teachers

(PPTA 83, p.2) p.11

There is an associated long standing debate about the relative merits of process versus product focused emphasises in education. The arguments, to a large measure, are circular. Education and learning is unquestionably and inescapably a process. The learning process, however, is usually directed towards particular aims, goals, objectives, intentions or learning outcomes – terms which are ripe for confusion. The concepts are largely interrelated in meaning. The debate around outcomes, semantic or otherwise, will continue. It is to be expected that modern State curriculum

will include clear statements of what students are to achieve, what they should know and be able to do.

### **Recommendation 8**

*No action in respect to the draft document, although consideration is important.*

### **Consideration 9: Sustainability (Environmental and other)**

Sustainability should be of concern to all human kind – and that concern can be best informed through education. It is an issue that is receiving considerable attention at the highest levels, nationally and internationally. It is current and topical, yet it is fundamentally future directed and not just of the moment. It is appropriate that a nation's school curriculum recognises and addresses major societal and environmental responsibilities that implicate all individuals and groups as well as wider social and economic forces. Sustainability comes with this domain.

Sustainability is quite loosely detectable in the *A Vision* (p.8) section of the draft document. It should be more explicit. It is referred to more specifically in *Designing a School Curriculum* (p.26). It also warrants consideration for attention in the Science, Technology, and Social Sciences curricula descriptions and achievement objectives.

### **Recommendation 9**

*i. Consider revising the 'Actively involved' part of A Vision to read along the lines:*

*contributors to the present and future well-being of New Zealand – social, economic and environmental.*

*ii. Consider including sustainability in relevant learning area descriptions and their achievement objectives (e.g., science, technology, social sciences).*

### **Consideration 10: A Vision**

A statement of vision in some respects supplants a statement of general aims. Vision is future focussed. But it is more about the future we are *creating* than a future we are headed towards. The components of *A Vision* are consistent with this notion. They highlight the qualities we seek for

our students; qualities that contribute to and represent successful, worthwhile and happy lives. It is a matter of debate as to whether such qualities should or shouldn't relate to, or derive from, precepts of individualism, nationalism, culturism or economism or any other isms. It does matter, however, that there is a widely accepted frame of reference for a vision which relates to the purpose of education. Moreover, it should be a statement of vitality: an overarching *raison d'être* for all that follows in the curriculum document. The opening paragraph of *A Vision* somewhat dampens vitality in that much of it comes across as "official" speak.

A number of respondents are uneasy about the singling out of economy as a seemingly *priori* precept. It is unlikely that education's great thinkers and philosophers would support such an emphasis. It is a strongly governmental, pragmatic notion. Yet it does have its own quarter of rationale.

Concerns in submissions suggest that the vision needs to include dimensions such as spiritual/cultural, personal 'character', social responsibility, democratic participation, healthy lifestyle, life-long learning, and tolerance. There is perhaps an oversight in omitting ethical and spiritual qualities. The list could go on, yet it is helpful to the extent that it indicates that *A Vision* would benefit from further examination and review before it is finalised. Most particularly, the wording of the opening paragraph should be reconsidered. It would also be helpful to have a succinct opening statement about what is intended by vision.

### **Recommendation 10**

- i. Review A Vision in light of ideas offered in submissions, and make wording improvements where considered appropriate.*
- ii. Reconsider and rewrite the opening paragraph, and include a statement about what is meant or intended by vision (as has been done for other sections such as Principles, Values, Key Competencies).*

### **Consideration 11: Principles**

The written submissions raise few significant issues with the principles.

The opening statement says "Principles are beliefs that guide practice", yet they are not written as statements of belief. They are written as a set of assumed facts. It might be more appropriate to say that "principles are guides to action. They guide decisions about what should be done and

how it should be done. Student learning benefits when these beliefs (principles?) are demonstrated in practice.”

### **Recommendation 11**

*Revise the opening statement to clarify the nature of principles consistent with the way in which they are written.*

### **Consideration 12: Values**

None of the issues submitted on the Values section of the document convinced of the need for significant changes. A minor, yet significant, wording addition is recommended.

### **Recommendation 12**

*Insert words to show that the set of values given in the document is not exclusive of other values that individual schools may wish to include.*

*The specific ways in which these and any other values find expression in an individual school will be guided by dialogue between the school and its community. DNZC p.10*

### **Consideration 13: Key Competencies**

Overall, the Key Competencies have been well received and supported. There are no commanding issues resulting from the consultations. As with submissions on other aspects of the document, a number fail to make distinctions between the level of definition appropriate to this document and what should more properly follow in guiding support and resource materials. Two issues, however, warrant attention: the relationship between the Key Competencies and the Learning Areas, and the absence of physical competencies.

A number of respondents were concerned of the need to

“tease out” how Key Competencies provide a framework for designing learning environments and experiences within each learning area

(PPTA 83, NZEI 34) p.56

While it is not the place of the curriculum document to tackle this elaboration, there needs to be confidence that this need can be effectively addressed. There are grounds for having such confidence if it is understood that the Key Competencies are process rather than content based. Their development is situationally dependent and cross-curricula. They require pedagogical knowledge and approaches to classroom teaching and management that for a number of teachers could involve adjustment of approaches. This may take time, but that does not undermine or weaken the validity of the competencies. Advancing practice is a professional responsibility.

The absence of reference to physical competencies is raised in a few submissions. This raises the question, are physical abilities needed by people in order to “live, learn, work, and contribute as active members of their communities”? Are they cross curricula, or are they curriculum area specific? If the answers are clearly yes, and they are cross curricula, then they should be included in either the **Managing Self** or **Participating and Contributing** competencies. This needs to be considered.

### **Recommendation 13**

*Consider whether physical abilities should be included within the Key Competencies.*

### **Consideration 14: Learning Area Descriptions**

Just 26 of the written submissions raised issues with the learning area descriptions. These were thinly spread across type of submitter. (p.61) Many of the issues reflect individuals’ own slants on what is actually said or intended. examples:

There is no mention of literature in the draft document. (Lytton High School 35; Lake Taupo Christian School 37) p.69.

*English is the study, use, and enjoyment of the English language and its literature, ... (draft NZ Curriculum, p.15)*

*and*

There are too many strands (in Mathematics and Statistics). (Canterbury University 57) p.87

*There are 3 strands in Mathematics and Statistics. (cf. DNZC)*

*and*

Lack mentioning of senior subjects such as: Physics, chemistry, biology, agriculture or horticulture (PPTA 83) p.94

*Living World. Biology explores ...: Physical World. Physics is ...; Material World. Chemistry is ... (cf. DNZC pp. 20-21)*

It is difficult to escape this sort of thing entirely, despite the best of editorial and other endeavours. Generally, however, the comments deserve discussion among those responsible for having an informed overview of others' ideas and perceptions (particularly for the development of ensuing support material). Some of the comments might also prove useful for those involved in editorial refinements and polishing of the document. Some relate more to wider education policy and resourcing than to the contents of the national curriculum document.

#### ***Recommendation 14***

***Consider addressing the following points:***

- ***Explanation of “why study the Arts” in the Arts learning area description. (p.65)***
- ***Clarification of the non-discretionary requirement to include Learning Languages at all levels (confusion is apparent in submissions, cf. p.79).***
- ***Reference to the place of the Treaty of Waitangi in the Social Sciences description.***
- ***Making the development of practical skills in Technology more explicit within the Technological Practice strand.***

#### **Consideration 15: Planning for the Development of the Key Competencies**

There is debate and concern about the assessment of Key Competencies, and any *requirement* that they be formally (evidentially) assessed and reported against. The draft document begins paragraph 7 of this section with, “The competencies should be assessed ...” (p.29). Regardless of what follows in this particular sentence, it is nonetheless open to interpretation (and misinterpretation) by many to imply a requirement that they be assessed. Since the Key Competencies are intended as central component of the National Curriculum, it is reasonable to expect that teachers and schools should be able to identify the extent to which

students are advancing in such competencies. But the assessment of the key competencies is a considerably complex issue that requires balance and much professional wisdom in order to avoid simplistic practices and judgements. This issue that warrants careful and thorough deliberation, with attendant consideration to the wording of this section in the curriculum document.

**Recommendation 15**

***Thoroughly deliberate upon and clarify whether the assessment and reporting of Key Competencies should be a mandatory requirement on schools, then word the curriculum document in a way that is unambiguously consistent with the resultant position.***

## **Consideration 16: Planning for Purposeful Assessment**

Paragraph 2 of the section titled, “Assessment for national qualifications” begins:

The Qualifications Framework has opened up new possibilities for schools.  
p.31

### **Recommendation 16**

*Modify the wording of the first sentence of paragraph 2, Assessment for national qualifications along the lines, “The Qualifications framework offers numerous possibilities for schools”.*

## **Consideration 17: Planning for Coherent Pathways**

The section is well conceived in that it provides an overview of connections between each phase (stage?) of learning from early childhood through to tertiary education. NZCER offer a useful guidance to

(The section is) mostly about literacy and numeracy. It does not address other aspects of learning such as the rich opportunities schools can give students to develop a broad range of interests and competencies such as social and culture understanding, team work, physical, social and leadership skills. (NZCER 78) p.118

Clear messages about this kind of balance are desirable, and supported.

### **Recommendation 17**

*Revise the Planning for Coherent Pathways section to reflect more clearly a balanced scope for the focus of teaching and learning.*

## Section 4

### Conclusion

This paper has been prepared under significant time constraints, and hence it was a pragmatic decision to examine each of the collation reports separately. With more time, it would have been useful to synthesise the analyses. The Colmar Brunton report is important in that it represents by far the largest number of responses (9117), whereas the Lift Education report derived from 174 responses. Unquestionably, both reports give very substantial support to the draft document; there are no convincing challenges to its structure. The longer submissions cover a multitude of reactions, ideas and perspectives. Many of these should be borne in mind by those responsible for final editorial work on the document (this was not the function of this paper). A large number of respondents made claims or interpretations that were not specifically related to the purpose or contents of the curriculum document, or were misunderstandings of what is actually written in the document. In many cases, this suggested confusion or lack of knowledge about the purpose and function of a national curriculum. This needs to be addressed to avoid ongoing unrealistic expectations of what a national curriculum should include.

The revised curriculum is quite intentionally designed to meet the revision brief (see page 2), which means giving sufficient scope for localisation. An overly prescriptive document could seriously undermine this intention. Regardless, it needs to be appreciated that a national curriculum statement is not an all inclusive teaching manual. It is a broad and largely inclusive statement addressed to the widest possible audiences of interest, education professionals and all others alike. It would be quite unrealistic, therefore, to expect that everyone would follow completely or agree with everything that the document represents. But that doesn't deny schools and their communities the opportunities to augment and elaborate the national curriculum in meaningful and acceptable ways.

As one of the main goals of the revision of the national curriculum is to strengthen school ownership of curriculum, it is fundamentally important that the document itself makes very clear the scope available for localisation. To leave this to the National Education Guidelines is to undermine the status of the national curriculum in providing such direction, and to risk confusion and irregularities in the interpretation of requirements by schools and government agencies. This sort of confusion, which has prevailed over the past decade, should be remedied.

It needs to be understood that the Government's terms of reference for the revision of the curriculum did not include a re-appraisal of curriculum design in terms of achievement levels and objectives (learning outcomes). These structural features of our national curriculum are to remain. However, authority was given to review the achievement objectives. This gave the opportunity to improve the clarity and usefulness of objectives for describing standards that distinguish progressions from one level to the next. This has been done with mixed success. Further work is needed to make the achievement objectives useful for determining students' levels of learning.

A significant number of submissions concerned the Treaty of Waitangi and associated issues, including expectations for instruction in te reo Maori. For a large part, submissions showed a widespread lack of knowledge about the provisions in the Education Act. The national curriculum cannot be at variance with what the Act stipulates. It cannot mandate the teaching of te reo Maori, for example, when the Act clearly makes this discretionary and subject to parents' wishes. While the draft document makes very little direct reference to the Treaty or gives explicit reference to how it is subscribing to the State's Treaty obligations within education, those provisions are nonetheless spread through the draft curriculum, albeit in an inclusive manner.

In a diverse democratic society with a wide spectrum of standpoints, ultra-liberal through to neo-conservative, it is to be expected that there will be equally wide and strongly held viewpoints about how a national curriculum should be framed, what it should contain, and where emphases should lie. Some groups are in privileged positions of being able to publicly assert and promote their ambitions. Others are not. Clearly, it would be unrealistic to expect that any national curriculum might escape criticism, well informed or otherwise. New Zealand's revised curriculum is no exception, yet considerable confidence can be taken from the strength of support offered in the public submissions and the genuine steps taken to ensure equity in the processes of its formulation.

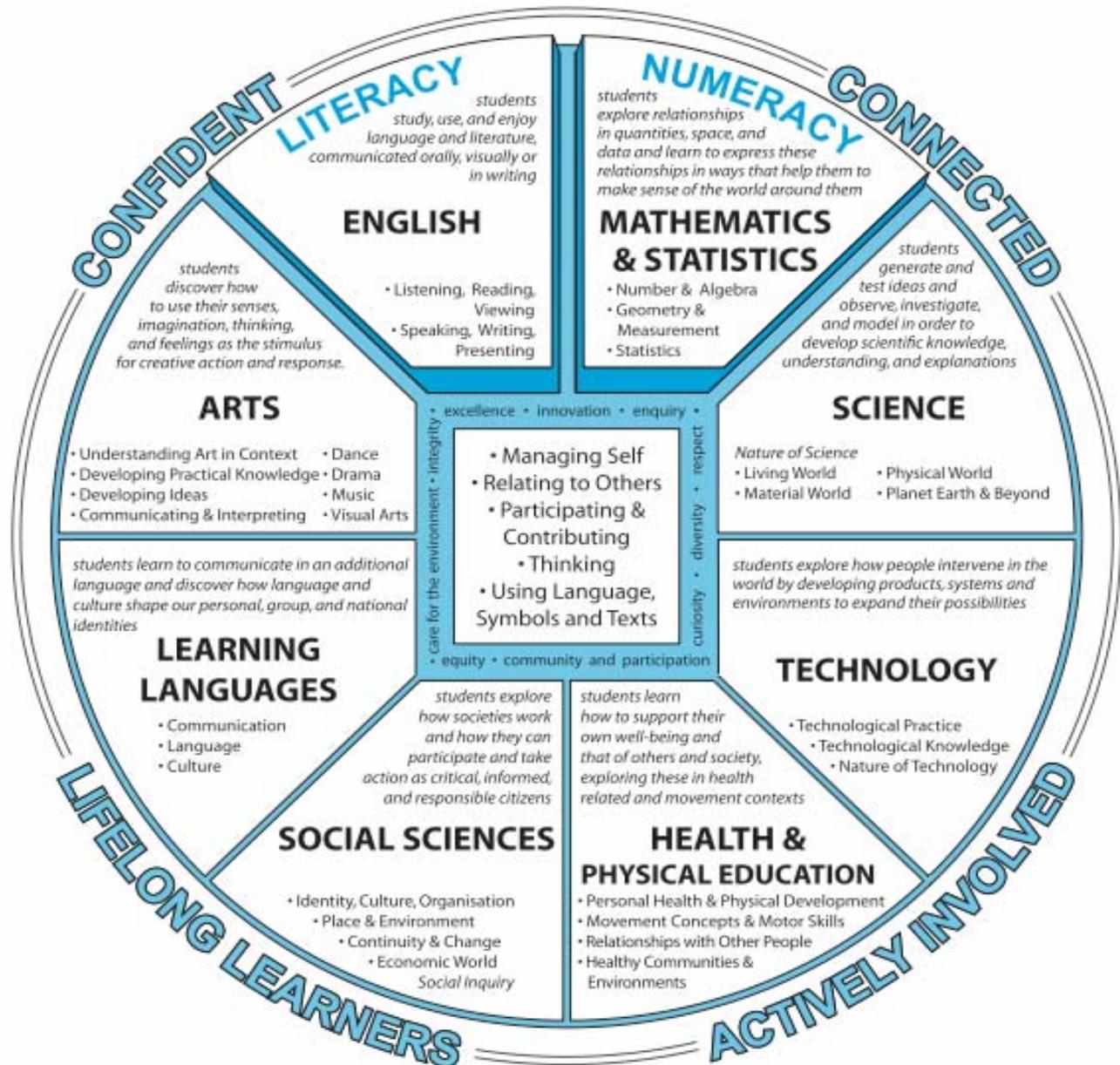
Until we take seriously the extent to which education is caught up in the real world of shifting and unequal power relations, we will be living in a world divorced from reality. The theories, policies, and practices involved in education are *not* technical. They are inherently ethical and political, and they ultimately involve – once this is recognised – intensely personal choices about what Marcus Raskin calls “the common good”.

*Apple, M.W. (2004) Ideology and Curriculum (Third Edition). New York: Routledge Falmer. p.XX*

Looking ahead, a first major step toward developing national curriculum “literacy” is to possess a coherent overview of the connections in its structure, meaning and contents. Figure 1 (attached) offers an example of what that overview might be like. A first major step towards successful and satisfying development and implementation of curriculum at the level of the school and the classroom is to have a strong conceptual image of what it means to be educated. This, in turn, provides a rationale for education and how the curriculum is interpreted. One such example of a conceptual image is given in figure 2.

Figure 1

**NEW ZEALAND CURRICULUM  
(2006 DRAFT)**



Design: Lester Flockton 02/07

Figure 2



Lester Flockton 9/06