

Critique of the New Zealand Draft Curriculum: An Inclusive/Special Education Perspective

Report to the Ministry of Education

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Introduction

The New Zealand Curriculum should be inclusive of all students with no learner excluded from access to it. This concept is endorsed in the Draft Curriculum in the statement: *The New Zealand Curriculum will apply to all school students, irrespective of gender, ethnicity, belief, ability or disability, social or cultural background, or geographical location in New Zealand* (MoE, 2006, p. 7).

According to Mentis, Quinn and Ryba (2005) an inclusive curriculum implies there should be one curriculum for all students rather than one for regular students and one for students with special educational needs. This report therefore, provides an inclusion-focussed critique of the Draft New Zealand Curriculum. Inclusion is the process of increasing the presence, participation and achievement of all students in their local schools, with particular reference to those groups of students who are at risk of exclusion, marginalisation, or underachievement (Ainscow & Moss, 2002, p. 3). Inclusion involves increasing the capacity of schools to respond to the diversity of such students by restructuring the cultures, policies and practices in schools (Ainscow & Booth, 2002, p. 3) and it is with this lens that the Draft Curriculum has been critiqued. The curriculum supports the rights of learners with diverse needs to access the national curriculum and have their needs met in the school of their choice. Therefore this review has appraised how well the curriculum caters for all learners with diverse needs, in either regular or special school settings.

Throughout the report, links have been made to relevant literature to inform understanding of the theoretical influences relating to children with diverse needs and the curriculum. In addition, a Teacher Reference Group, comprising practitioners with expertise in special/inclusive education, was established to provide professional guidance in respect to the suitability of the curriculum for all students, regardless of ability or disability. Members of the Teacher Reference Group included: James Abernethy (Principal, Arahunga Special School); Kerry Howard (Assistant Principal, Central Normal School); Laureen King, (Teacher, Winchester School); John Lukkasson (RTLB); Barbara Sperl (SENCO, Freyberg High School); and Jane Walker (SENCO, Palmerston North Intermediate School). In addition, Anna Lukkasson attended the meeting and offered her perspective as a student with high needs. This consultation informed the critique. Ideas contributed by the Reference Group have been incorporated into the report.

Accessible and flexible curricula can serve as the key to creating inclusive schools (UNESCO, 2005, p. 25).

The above quote from The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) is of direct relevance to this critique. The curriculum is at the core of schooling (Pugach & Warger, 1996) and can be the deciding factor in whether education is inclusive or exclusive. Within an inclusive framework the focus is centred on learning, rather than special education per se. As Clough and Corbett (2000) state,

It is arguably the curriculum which always stood – secure as a Berlin Wall – between mainstream and segregated special provision; it was the possibility of mediating that curriculum, and the means of its delivery, which enabled ‘integrative’ education; and it is still the curriculum on which the success of any truly inclusive initiative rests. (p. 21)

In regard to curriculum issues worldwide, the Salamanca World Conference on Special Needs Education (1994) adopted a framework for action that stated:

- Curricula should be adapted to children’s needs, not vice-versa, with the implication being that schools should provide curricular opportunities to suit children with different abilities and interests.
- Children with special needs should receive additional instructional support in the context of the regular curriculum, not a different curriculum.
- For children with special educational needs a continuum of support should be provided, ranging from minimal help in regular classrooms to additional learning support programmes within the school and extending, where necessary, to the provision of assistance from specialist teachers and external support staff.

Much of the international debate around the definition of curriculum centres on the distinction between curriculum and instruction. Adams, Sands, and Stout (1995) maintain that curriculum is concerned with the “what” and instruction is concerned with the “how to.” This view is not supported by New Zealand’s Minister of Education who believes that the Draft Curriculum provides the opportunity for educators to determine not just the “what”, but also the “how” of student learning (Maharey, 2007).

A set of questions was used to provide a framework for the critique of the Draft Curriculum through an inclusive education lens. These questions were either posed by the Ministry of Education or derived from literature in the field of inclusive education.

- What human values promoting inclusion are being fostered through the curriculum? (UNESCO, 2005, p. 25).
- Are children’s rights and human rights part of the curriculum? (UNESCO, 2005, p. 25).
- In relation to children with special needs, does the curriculum take gender, cultural identity, and language background into consideration? (UNESCO, 2005, p. 25).

- Are students with special educational and behavioural needs reflected in the draft?
- How well could the curriculum be implemented for diverse learners and how might the draft be adapted for special education needs?
- Will the curriculum provide suitable support for classroom teachers and specialist staff when working with students who have special learning and behaviour needs?
- What might the role of the Key Competencies (and other particular sections) be for special education?
- Do the progressions in the Achievement Objectives by levels create inappropriate expectations for diverse learners?
- Does the draft imply a degree of norming related to the Achievement Objectives?
- What implications are there for the development of regulations (including a revision of the National Education Guidelines)?
- What reporting requirements are implied?
- Is the curriculum flexible enough to meet the needs of diverse learners?
- Is the content of the curriculum relevant to the real lives and futures of children with special needs? (UNESCO, 2005, p. 25).

Response to the Key Questions

This critique uses a two-pronged approach to address the overarching question: How does the New Zealand Draft Curriculum (1) reflect diversity and (2) meet the needs of diverse learners? The data are presented around these two perspectives.

1. Reflecting Diversity

The following six questions relate to reflecting diversity:

(a) What human values promoting inclusion are being fostered through the curriculum? (UNESCO, 2005, p. 25).

Values are clearly outlined and form the basis of the New Zealand Draft Curriculum, with a stand alone section that details a set of beliefs that New Zealand students should be encouraged to value. Specifically the curriculum promotes:

- Excellence
- Innovation, enquiry, and curiosity
- Diversity
- Respect
- Equity
- Community and participation
- Care for the environment
- Integrity

It is appropriate that values are evident in the document and four of the bullets (diversity, respect, equity, community and participation) specifically promote the concept of inclusion. In particular, the value of diversity is a vital component in an inclusive curriculum. This concept of diversity is supported by the Best Evidence Synthesis, which “rejects the notion of a ‘normal’ group and ‘other’ or minority groups of children and constitutes diversity and difference as central to the classroom endeavour and central to the focus of quality teaching in Aotearoa New Zealand” (Alton-Lee, (2003, p. v).

While this section of the Draft Curriculum outlines the values intended to support New Zealanders to live in a diverse and democratic society, it does go far enough. For example, “diversity, as found in our different cultures, languages, and heritages”,

should also include the concept of diverse abilities. Furthermore, within this section, the Treaty of Waitangi principles should also be incorporated into our nationhood ideals of living together.

The values section might also include valuing the excitement of learning, by adding it to the values of innovation, enquiry, and curiosity. Similarly, noting the valuing of perseverance and effort in the pursuit of excellence would better include the large number of children with learning difficulties within our education system.

(b) Are children’s rights and human rights part of the curriculum? (UNESCO, 2005, p. 25).

When human rights and children’s rights are part of the curriculum (as promulgated in UNESCO, 2005), that curriculum is more likely to bring about inclusive outcomes for all students.

The Values section of the Draft Curriculum lists values that are supported by society. Social justice is recognised under equity. Also clearly stated on this page is that New Zealand students are encouraged to value “respect for themselves, for others, and for human rights” (p. 10). However these values are not obvious in the learning areas and achievement objectives. For example, human rights are not specifically focused on until level 6 of the social science curriculum.

(c) In relation to children with special needs, does the curriculum take gender, cultural identity, and language background into consideration? (UNESCO, 2005, p. 25).

While there is no specific reference in the Draft Curriculum to gender, cultural identity and language background in relation to students with special educational needs, in general the principles of cultural heritage and equity and the values of diversity and equity are relevant to these students. There is a concern that equity is inadequately explained in the curriculum document. Given that the term is even defined differently (refer pages 9 and 10), information pertaining to achieving equitable outcomes needs to be included.

Additionally, research shows that in order for Maori learners with special needs to have their needs met in a culturally effective way, Treaty of Waitangi principles must be taken into account (Bevan-Brown, 2002). Treaty principles also reflect the value of democracy incorporated in the Draft Curriculum. On these two counts alone Treaty of Waitangi principles should be added to the new curriculum.

(d) Are students with special educational and behavioural needs reflected in the draft?

There is no strong sense when reading the draft that it applies to children who are disabled. Generally students with special educational needs are not “visible” in the curriculum document. While the picture on page 8 may reflect gender, age and ethnicity, it does not reflect disability. It would be relatively easy to amend the picture to include a child with some form of impairment. Although it is explicitly stated that the curriculum applies to all learners, including those with disabilities (p.7), this message is not evident throughout the entire document. The inclusion of visual reminders through pictorial representation and special education examples of best practice would increase the presence of students with disabilities throughout the curriculum document.

(e) Is the curriculum flexible enough to meet the needs of diverse learners?

As stated earlier, “accessible and flexible curricula can serve as the key to creating inclusive schools” (UNESCO, 2005, p. 25). Where teachers are knowledgeable about providing for students with diverse needs the curriculum is flexible enough to meet the needs of these students. However, where this knowledge is limited, teachers will need more guidance and direction to utilize the curriculum’s flexibility in order to meet students’ learning and behavioural needs.

A further concern is that the flexibility of the curriculum could potentially be detrimental to students with diverse needs. The power given to schools to design and implement their own curriculum will benefit these students if trustees, principals, teachers and school communities are well informed and supportive of inclusive

education. If this is not the case, the needs of these students may be unintentionally overlooked or given a low priority (Massey University, 2002). To avoid this possibility the requirement to cater for students with diverse needs (and other minority groups) should be highlighted.

(f) Is the content of the curriculum relevant to the real lives and futures of children with special needs? (UNESCO, 2005, p. 25).

Traditionally both in New Zealand and overseas there has been a focus in special education on a functional curriculum which emphasises life skills and on vocational training (Te Riele & Crump, 2002). While there is support for a core curriculum for all students there is a concern that the Draft Curriculum does not adequately incorporate the more “practical” elements of education across all achievement objectives levels. For example, topics such as healthy eating, self care, and safety need to be more widely included and valued.

At the secondary school level the Draft Curriculum is heavily slanted towards NCEA credit content. Opportunities are limited for the pre-vocational and vocational training needed by many students with special needs. It is suggested that “Learning in Years 11-13” (p.33) could be expanded to read: “In their senior school years, students *may* gain credits towards a range of recognised qualifications *and/or may be involved in a variety of pre-vocational and vocational courses*. Schools can extend this range by encouraging students to participate in programmes and study for qualifications offered by workplaces, *organisations and tertiary institutions*. *For students with special needs this could include involvement in courses that give alternative vocational options, or studying for Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network qualifications* (ASDAN).

This point is closely tied to criticism that has been levelled at the Australian Curriculum (Smyth & Hattam, 2004). Smyth and Hattam point out that the Australian Curriculum is still significantly skewed in the direction of selection for entry to university with (amongst other things) “a hierarchy of subjects with areas such as mathematics at the top” (p.59). Subjects such as pre-vocational training are often

placed at the bottom of the hierarchy, or are non-existent on a curriculum framework. This may act to reinforce the idea that the curriculum (in relation to secondary school at least) is a tool for sorting students for university. An inclusive curriculum would not do this.

2. Meeting Needs

The Draft Curriculum was examined for its ability to meet the needs of learners with special educational needs. In particular, the draft was examined for how well the curriculum could be implemented for students with learning and behavioural difficulties in relation to: adaptation; the degree of norming; support for students, whanau, teachers and specialist staff; key competencies; achievement objectives; regulations; and reporting.

(a) Will the curriculum provide suitable support for classroom teachers and specialist staff when working with students who have special learning and behaviour needs?

An inclusive curriculum provides teachers with opportunities to give additional support in practical subjects and to emphasise pre-vocational training. This should be over and above the periods allotted for more traditional school subjects (UNESCO, 2005). An inclusive curriculum also provides opportunities for students to have their specific needs met (for example, sign language) in the regular environment. It is uncertain whether the Draft Curriculum will support teachers and specialist staff to do this. In order for teachers to give this specialist support, they will require suitable support themselves.

Students who have special educational needs, particularly those with very high needs, often require specialist interventions, for example, orientation, mobility and speech and language assistance. Students who are disabled may also require alternative communication skills, for example, signing or the use of computer technology. The New Zealand Disability Strategy (Ministry of Health, 2001) specifically states that in providing the best education for disabled people it supports the development of

effective communication by providing access to education in New Zealand Sign Language, communication technologies and human aids (p.20).

While there is some support for the provision of specialist interventions and teaching strategies in the Health and Physical Education strand of the draft document, there are few other places in the curriculum that legitimise these necessary supports and interventions. A general concern is raised about the lack of information relating to provision within the Draft Curriculum and more guidance on the “how to” aspect is suggested. This would act as a support for teachers. To be readable and user friendly the final curriculum document should not be too large. Consequently, consideration should be given to producing a complementary document or website (e.g., TKI) that will contain “how to” information, exemplars, and relevant contact and resource information. Reference to where this information can be found could be provided in “end notes” in the final curriculum document. This information would serve as an “exemplar toolbox” to guide teachers in understanding ‘this is what it might look like in practice.’

As mentioned previously (refer section 1) pre-vocational training is an important aspect of the inclusive secondary school curriculum. It is vital that the curriculum is flexible enough for this type of training and to accommodate specific pre-vocational programmes such as ASDAN. (For an explanation of this, see *Tukutuku Korero the New Zealand Education Gazette*, 3 July, 2006, pp. 8-11, or www.asdan.co.nz).

(b) What might the role of the Key Competencies be for special education?

Generally, the key competencies are viewed very favourably in respect to teaching students with diverse needs. They are believed to provide a useful teaching focus and priority in programmes designed to meet individual needs (for example, IEPs). They also enable teaching to be decompartmentalised allowing for a holistic, integrated approach which research shows is effective for students with special needs (Trent, Artiles, & Englert, 1998).

The key competencies also provide a mandate for the teaching of social skills. These skills are especially important for many students with special needs and are often a

prerequisite for their learning particular subject content (Gresham, 1998). The key competencies can be viewed as the “key to inclusion”, therefore the addition of more information explaining them and more direction in their implementation and assessment is recommended.

Highlighted as an area requiring more attention is assessment of the key competencies. Teaching students with special needs often requires the content to be broken down into small, sequential steps. This highly focused approach is based on detailed, accurate assessment of the student’s existing skills and knowledge (Foreman, 2005). More information about the key competencies is needed in order to conduct this fine grained assessment and to enable the monitoring of progress. Some schools have developed their own system where key competencies have been “leveled” and associated achievement objectives written. In order to prevent teachers ‘reinventing the wheel’ in this respect, achievement objectives for the key competencies could be included in the final curriculum document. This would also assist in addressing the inconsistency of standards across schools, which is particularly problematic when students change schools and their prior assessment data are used in placement decisions.

Finally it is suggested that “managing self” should incorporate physical self care, which is a key priority area for students with very high needs. Physical self care also needs an increased presence in the achievement objectives of relevant learning areas. Additionally emotional awareness can be an issue for some students with special needs. For example, students with autism spectrum disorder may have significant behaviour and emotional difficulties. Learning to deal with these fits into the “managing self” competency.

(c) Do the progressions in the achievement objectives by levels create inappropriate expectations for diverse learners?

The expectations that teachers have of their students are powerful influences on student outcomes. Much has been written in the special education literature regarding the power of ‘self fulfilling prophecies’ (e.g., Alton-Lee, 2003; Tauber, 1997). For students who experience learning and behaviour difficulties, self-fulfilling prophecies can occur when teachers hold low expectations for their achievement. In an inclusive

classroom, teachers hold high expectations for the learning of all their students. The findings of this review indicate that while the progressions in the achievement objectives by levels do not create inappropriate expectations for diverse learners, problems may arise for teachers who equate class levels with curriculum levels or find it difficult to accept that children in one classroom can be working on different levels.

There is also concern that the achievement objectives are not basic enough for some children with special needs who are still at the stage of developing “pre” skills – for example pre-reading skills. To address these issues it is suggested that the curriculum clearly states that diversity in classrooms will mean that different students will be working on different levels and each classroom will have a number of different levels operating at the same time.

(d) Does the draft imply a degree of norming related to the achievement objectives?

“An inclusive approach seeks to discourage teaching which is based on a criterion of averages, meaning that some pupils will not be able to keep up, while others will find it too easy and consider the teaching boring” (UNESCO, 2005, p. 25). It also needs to be flexible enough to provide adjustment to individual differences to allow teachers to seek solutions that can be matched to each student’s needs (ibid).

The diagram on page 34 of the Draft Curriculum does imply a degree of ‘norming’ of curriculum levels. Despite this, the norming is reasonably broad and there is a realistic timeframe indicated. For example, the diagram shows that Level One may be appropriate for students prior to Year One and up to Year Six. However, to counter any suggestion of norming, the bands could be widened across the year levels with increased lighter colouring at each end. It is also suggested that a statement be placed in the introductory paragraph on page 34 indicating that the levels as they relate to age ranges are indicators only. All children are different with individual needs and abilities.

Level One is a main area of concern. Currently this level is expected to cater for the diverse range of abilities of children entering school. For a number of children there will be a gap between early childhood and Level One in terms of their readiness for

school. For many children with diverse needs Level One is too high. As a consequence some schools are opting to create their own “Pre Level One” However, this can be considered exclusionary as the levels should be written so that they address the needs of all children.

The fold out chart presenting information about achievement objectives by level could also be rearranged to lessen the impression of norming. At present, achievement objectives are organised by levels, with all curriculum areas grouped together for each level. This encourages an assumption that all children will be on the same level for all curriculum areas whereas in reality, a child may be on different levels for different curriculum areas. A more inclusive approach would be to have each curriculum area on one foldout sheet, with the achievement objectives for all levels presented.

At some place in the curriculum document a strong statement is required, regarding the need to make adaptations to the curriculum to meet the needs of all learners. Most current curriculum adaptation models emphasise the practices of supplementing, simplifying and/or changing (for example, Janney & Snell, 2000; Schulz & Carpenter, 1995).

(e) What implications are there for the development of regulations including a revision of the NEGS?

Implications for the development of regulations in relation to the new curriculum may become clearer in the future. However, some possibilities include a direction that:

- schools be required to identify barriers to the learning and participation of students who have historically been excluded or marginalized, or who are at risk of being excluded or marginalized and to show how they are working to overcome these barriers
- schools and teachers be required to work in partnership with specialists, parents and whanau in order to meet the needs of diverse school populations.

(f) What reporting requirements are implied?

Page 30 of the Draft Curriculum states that assessment data are used to provide evidence of student progress. The document should also state that assessment data are

used to make informed decisions regarding future learning and teaching. In regards to students who experience difficulties with learning and behaviour, there should also be some mention of the need for ecological and authentic assessment. It is stated (under the title “It is valid and fair”) that evidence needs to come from more than one assessment. For diverse student populations, it should be added that evidence might need to come from more than one person. To reinforce this important message, the diagram on page 31 should also include other professionals in the top red tier. For students who experience difficulties with learning and behaviour, assessment data often come from professionals such as speech language therapists, psychologists, RTLB and so forth.

The Draft Curriculum states, “assessment data can be used to compare the relative achievement of different groups of students” (p.30). This may imply, or reinforce the notion that there is a discrete group of learners with ‘special needs’ for which comparison data are relevant. An inclusive curriculum would not imply or reinforce this myth. Historically, the use of assessment data to categorise and label students who experience difficulty with learning and behaviour has usually been detrimental to these students, and often led to segregation and lowered teacher expectations. Any advantages to including this statement in the curriculum document need to be carefully weighed against the disadvantages. If included, it should be tempered to counter any negative effect it may have. The following wording could go some way towards counteracting the disadvantages: “When in the best interests of students, assessment data can be used to compare the relative achievement of different groups, bearing in mind that all students are different and individual.” Similarly some discussion of authentic assessment may be appropriate. Notwithstanding these concerns, the section on purposeful assessment is not deficit-based and has a positive emphasis on assessing to build on what the learner ‘can do.’ Including exemplars of effective assessment in practice might provide even greater clarity for teachers.

There needs to be a clear statement that in diverse classrooms, for assessment purposes it will be necessary to consider the need for adaptation to the way that some students demonstrate their learning.

Page-by-Page Suggestions

The following table presents suggestions for word changes on various pages of the Draft New Zealand Curriculum. On some pages there are also suggestions for points (as currently written) to be added or amended.

Table 1.

Suggested Amendments to specific pages of the Draft New Zealand Curriculum

Page Number	Focus Section	Suggested Changes
8	<p>Education has a vital role to play in helping our young people to reach their individual potential and develop the competencies they will need for further study, work, lifelong learning.</p> <p>Section entitled “Connected”</p> <p>Picture</p>	<p>Education has a vital role to play in helping our young people to reach their individual potential and develop the competencies they will need for further study, work, lifelong learning and to prepare them to live in diverse communities.</p> <p>Add <i>Altruistic</i> as third point</p> <p>Include student with impairment (e.g., in wheelchair or with white cane).</p>
9	<p>Inclusion is not listed as a principle</p> <p>Equity Principle, as it stands now, does not mention students who experience difficulty with learning and behaviour.</p> <p>The meaning of the word ‘equity seems to have a different meaning each time it is used (see page 9, then page 10).</p>	<p>Add ‘<i>Inclusion</i>’ as a principle in its own right. The descriptor could read: All students experience an inclusive curriculum that addresses and responds to the diversity of needs of all learners through increasing participation in learning, cultures and communities and reducing exclusion within and from education (UNESCO, 2005, p.13).</p> <p>Add: All students’ identities, cultures, languages, <i>abilities</i>, and talents (ability is different to talent).</p> <p>Make meaning consistent</p>
10	<p>The first and last points are very similar in the paragraph, beginning “Through their learning experiences...,”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make their own values and those of others • the values of other peoples and cultures <p>There is no mention of the Treaty of Waitangi principles.</p> <p>Diversity, as found in our different cultures, languages, and heritages;</p>	<p>Change wording in bullets so there is a more distinct difference.</p> <p>Include reference to the Treaty of Waitangi</p> <p>Diversity, as found in our different cultures, languages, heritages, <i>and abilities</i>;</p>

Page Number	Focus Section	Suggested Changes
11	<p>People adopt practices that they can see used and valued.....</p> <p>Students need to be challenged to develop their competencies...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> using language, symbols, and texts. <p>They understand...sustainability of social, physical, and economic environments.</p>	<p><i>Most</i> people adopt practices that they can see used and valued..(adding the word <i>most</i> gives consideration to students with ASD).</p> <p>Students need to be challenged <i>and supported</i> to develop their competencies...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> using language, symbols, texts, and assistive technologies. <p>Add the word cultural. They understand ...sustainability of social, physical, <i>cultural</i> and economic environments.</p>
12	<p>Heading – Using language, symbols, and texts.”</p> <p>People use languages and symbols to ...</p> <p>Students who are competent ...use words, number, images ...</p> <p>They use ICT confidently....</p>	<p>Heading – Using language symbols, <i>assistive technology</i>, and texts.</p> <p>People use languages, <i>signs</i> and symbols to..</p> <p>Students who are competent ...use words, <i>signs</i>, number, images ...</p> <p>Reword to ensure the meaning of ICT also includes assistive communication equipment.</p>
14	<p>This is the only learning area that does not have a section entitled “Why study the Arts?”</p>	<p>Make consistent with other areas.</p>
16	<p>There are no AOs in the early levels related to healthy eating. This is an important life skill, at times more so for children who experience difficulty with learning and behaviour</p> <p>Why study in this learning area?</p>	<p>Why study Health and PE? Change to be consistent with other pages.</p>
18	<p>This is the first time that the New Zealand Sign Language is mentioned.</p>	<p>Refer to NZSL earlier. Page 18 is too late.</p>
24	<p>They must continually respond... while ensuring that their other students are...</p> <p>For example, new learners of English require specific kinds of help...</p> <p>Making connections</p>	<p>They must continually respond... while ensuring that [delete their other] <i>all</i> students are...”</p> <p>Add: Similarly to help them access the curriculum, children with special needs may require adaptations to be made to their learning programmes.</p> <p>In the “Making Connections” paragraph, suggest adding a reference about making</p>

	<p>Students need sufficient time and opportunity to engage with ...</p> <p>In providing multiple...that sequence their students' learning ...</p>	<p>connections with specialists who provide support for children with diverse needs.</p> <p>Students need sufficient time [and] opportunity, <i>and support</i> to engage with ...</p> <p>Add examples of sequencing for children with diverse needs (eg., slow down, increment, adapt).</p>
25	Effective teachers design ...or in new ways.	Add to sentence. Effective teachers design learning experiences <i>that encourage risk taking</i> , that stimulate...
26	<p>It builds on existing good practice...</p> <p>Critical literacies such as financial literacy....</p>	<p>It builds on up to date, research-informed practice...</p> <p>Suggest including other examples, such as social literacies.</p>
28	<p>The curriculum assumes that all students can learn ... or in the same way.</p> <p>Influencing factors include ... the learning context...</p> <p>All students are given appropriate and sufficient opportunities to learn.</p>	<p>Extend sentence: The curriculum assumes that all students can learn ... or in the same way <i>or to the same degree</i>.</p> <p>Influencing factors include ... the learning context, <i>the student's ability and motivation</i>, and the complexity of...</p> <p>All students are given appropriate and sufficient opportunities <i>and support</i> to learn.</p>
32	<p>Years 5-10: During these years, students move ...</p> <p>..in preparation for specialised learning that takes place...</p>	<p>Years 5-10: During these years, <i>most</i> students move ...</p> <p>..in preparation for <i>ongoing</i> learning that takes place</p>
33	In their senior school years, students gain credits towards a range of recognised qualifications. Schools can extend this range by encouraging students to participate in programmes and study for qualifications offered by workplaces, and by tertiary institutions.	In their senior school years, students <i>may</i> gain credits towards a range of recognised qualifications <i>and/or may be involved in a variety of pre-vocational and vocational courses</i> . Schools can extend this range by encouraging students to participate in programmes and study for qualifications offered by workplaces, <i>organizations and tertiary institutions</i> . <i>For students with special needs this could include involvement in courses that give alternative vocational options, or studying for Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network qualifications (ASDAN)</i> .
34	Achievement objective by Level	Widen bands and colouring (Refer to discussion on pages 12-13).

Summary of Points for Consideration

In answering the questions that guided the critique of the Draft New Zealand Curriculum a number of additions and amendments were suggested. The following provides a summary of these points for consideration.

Include

- Treaty of Waitangi principles
- Levelled achievement objectives for the key competencies and/or detailed guidance for assessing the key competencies. In particular Level One requires further examination.
- Reference to physical self-care in the section, “Managing Self”
- Recognition of pre-vocational and vocational training and qualifications
- Making disabled learners more visible in the curriculum (for example, by referring directly to students who are disabled, and including pictures of students with impairments)

Expand on/increase:

- the focus on human rights, particularly the teaching of human rights
- the principle of Equity
- “functional” curriculum content eg healthy eating, physical self care and safety

Highlight:

- teachers’ responsibility to meet the needs of students with special needs
- the necessity of curriculum adaptation to meet the needs of diverse school populations

- the role of assistive technology in allowing students to access the curriculum
- caution over using assessment data to group, categorise and compare different groups of students
- relevant links to answer the ‘how to’ question (e.g., assessment exemplars, TKI etc)

Concluding Comments

How well could the curriculum be implemented for diverse learners and how might the draft be adapted for special educational needs? This question encompasses the philosophy behind critiquing the Draft Curriculum from an inclusive education perspective. The curriculum should clearly show teachers that they can and have to make adaptations in order to provide for students with diverse needs. The increased emphasis on social skills and social development suggests that teachers will feel affirmed in making social skills a focus area in IEP planning. The curriculum places a strong emphasis on promoting excellence and may go some way towards reducing underachievement amongst children with diverse needs. All children can learn, but not always on the same day or in the same way (Switlick, in Bradley et al., 1997). This understanding must be reflected in the curriculum document.

As previously stated this critique of the Draft New Zealand Curriculum is informed by the collective knowledge and experience of the Teacher Reference Group consulted, the authors and by relevant special/inclusive education literature. A single curriculum designed to meet the needs of all students in Aotearoa/New Zealand is firmly supported. It is believed that the draft document is well positioned to achieve this. However, it can be strengthened by increasing the content specifically related to students with diverse needs and abilities. If the points raised and suggestions made in this critique are acted upon, the final curriculum will have more relevance to these students, their parents, family/whanau and to the professionals charged with their education.

References

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