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Curriculum Project



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NATIONAL COUNCIL OF WOMEN
OF NEW ZEALAND
TE KAUNIHERA WAHINE
O AOTEAROA
Affiliated to the International
Council of Women

28 November 2006

Hon Steve Maharey
Minister of Education
Parliament Buildings
Wellington

RECEIVED	
Office of HON. S. MAHAREY	FROM: OFFICE OF HON. S. MAHAREY
	DATE REQUIRED
	PRIORITY 1-10 WORKING DAYS
	PRIORITY 2-20 WORKING DAYS
	SPECIFIED DATE
	DRAFT REPLY / REPORT
	DIRECT REPLY / APPROPRIATE ACTION
	RECORD

Dear Mr Maharey

Ad. Civic
The New Zealand Curriculum: Draft for Consultation . Our ref LoS SL06.27

The National Council of Women of New Zealand (NCWNZ) is an umbrella organization representing 42 nationally organized societies. It has 31 branches spread throughout the country to which women from some 150 societies are affiliated. NCWNZ also represents a number of individual women. The Council's function is to serve women, the family and the community at local, national and international level through study, research, discussion and action.

NCWNZ has a Standing Committee on Education and anything related to the education of New Zealanders is of great interest. This response to the Draft Curriculum document is based on policy developed since 1896 and from the written responses from more than 200 members, the majority of whom represent the opinions of their affiliated organisations.

In general NCWNZ members welcomed the Curriculum document on the grounds that it was focused on meeting the needs of New Zealand citizens and communities in times of dramatic change. It provided a framework derived from national and international research and consultation spread over a number of years. Above all it emerged out of in-depth review and analysis of the Curriculum which was introduced in 1992.

The positive comments made included:

- the emphasis on flexibility and freedom to plan
- the focus on meeting individual community needs
- the possibility of more manageable workloads for teachers
- the emphasis on the broader scope of competencies as opposed to skills
- the acknowledgement of the importance of values
- the implied acknowledgement that schools and teachers do make a difference to building the NZ character
- a shorter and more manageable set of curriculum documents which appear to constitute a more integrated whole
- the focus on pedagogy
- continuity between the current and the new curriculum documents

Working for women for over 100 years

- a staged and unhurried implementation

Concerns included:

- the omission of stronger guidelines on the place of Treaty of Waitangi in NZ
- the omission of reference in the curriculum to gender inclusiveness
- enhanced problems of curriculum continuity when students move schools
- fear that inadequate funding would prevent schools meeting identified needs
- a shortage of well-trained teachers in necessary subject areas such as home economics and woodwork
- the omission of a clear place for careers education
- the emphasis in Health and Physical Education on fitness at the expense of a healthy diet, sex and drug education and human relationships building
- fear that the freedom to meet students' needs will not translate into the actual appointment of staff to teach in the desired areas
- fear that despite greater freedom and flexibility that teachers' workload and stress will increase
- fear that NCEA will drive what schools do at the upper levels and hinder the change in focus which underwrites the new curriculum
- omission of any reference to spirituality. Humans are spiritual beings. This is not acknowledged in the sections on values.

Another area of concern identified was the move away from the gender inclusiveness approach. In 1994, the Ministry of Education stated: "The aim of a gender inclusive curriculum is to enable students of both genders to understand the social construction of gender, question it, and value and support the roles individuals, both male and female, play within society."¹

Some believe that gender inclusiveness provides one means of offsetting gender stereotyping. Its removal potentially leaves girls open to a less fair educational experience.

The completed Feedback Questionnaire is attached.

NCWZN wishes to thank the Ministry for the opportunity to respond to the draft New Zealand Curriculum and especially for the time allowed for this consultation. Given the common and growing use of the internet for communication and distribution of information, it is suggested that a version of discussion documents of this kind should be available for downloading without colour to cut the ease and cost of distribution.

Yours sincerely



Christine Low
National President

Frances Townsend
Convener, Education
Standing committee

FEEDBACK QUESTIONNAIRE
The NZ Curriculum: Draft for consultation 2006

Section A

Question 2

Form being completed on behalf of a group of 220+ who represent all groups listed.

Section B

Question 3

Agree to all.

Comments: NZWNZ members approved the flexibility, but were concerned that because of funding or personnel shortages, flexibility did not guarantee that all schools would be able to provide a curriculum which would meet the needs of all, or even most, students.

Question 4

Quite easy to all.

Comments: Some members complained that the use of colour on the downloaded version of the Curriculum made it too difficult and costly to download and thus hindered wide distribution.

Question 5

Considerable impact to all.

Comments: Most respondents thought that the curriculum would impact positively on schools by lessening pressure on schools to cover so much and by emphasizing relevance related to students needs. Some thought that the impact of NCEA, teachers' access to resources and their traditions of teaching would inhibit change and therefore impact.

Question 6

Challenges: The main changes identified included lack of specific direction regarding the Treaty of Waitangi, gender inclusive-ness, non-sexism and non-racism, lack of adequate resourcing and funding, enough well-trained teachers esp. in home economics and wood work. Teachers to teach languages will also be in short supply.

Moderate to all.

Question 7

Quite easy to all.

Comments: It was acknowledged that defining values could be difficult and that schools teach values by the way they operate as much as by what is taught. Whole school and community participation and involvement will be needed here.

Question 8

Very useful to all.

Comments: While some respondents thought that skills had been dropped from the curriculum, the majority supported the broader definition of human development which key competencies encompassed and understood that skills were subsumed within the category of key competencies. NCWNZ members also strongly supported the emphasis on effective pedagogy.

Section C

Question 9

Very accurately: Arts, English, Learning Languages, Maths & Stats,
Quite accurately: Science, Technology
Not very accurately: Health & P.E., Social Sciences
Not at all: -

Comments: In particular concern was expressed about Health & PE because Health appeared to be linked almost exclusively to fitness without adequate acknowledgement of the need for proper diet, adequate sex and drug education and human relationships education for good mental health. Concern was also expressed about the fact that technology appeared to be linked to theory rather than hands-on skill learning.

Question 10

In most cases to all.

Comments: Some NCWNZ respondents focused on the much publicised low achievement levels of many NZ children in written, spoken language, basic grammar & numeracy, and queried whether the new curriculum would solve those problems unless there was adequate funding, resourcing and training of teachers, both pre and in-service, so that the achievement objectives can be understood and then implemented. Almost all respondents thought that the ToFW should have been explicit in the achievement objectives.