

***Critique of***  
***The New Zealand Curriculum: Draft***  
***for Consultation 2006***

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# Critique of The New Zealand Curriculum Draft for Consultation 2006

## 1. Introduction

The draft New Zealand Curriculum is a considered document, which encapsulates some six years of mature reflection and development. It draws on the surveys, meetings, submissions, comparative student performance data, literature review and international critiques<sup>1</sup> that resulted in *The Curriculum Stocktake Report* (Ministry of Education, 2002) and on subsequent curriculum development activities involving more than 15 000 students, teachers, principals, advisers, and academics.

### 1.1 Purpose and scope

The purpose of this commentary is:

*'...to be a critique of the draft New Zealand Curriculum against selected recommendations of the Curriculum Stocktake Report 2002 (CSR)...*

*The selected recommendations of the CSR are:*

- 1 *The modified versions of the frameworks should be similar in structure to the existing frameworks. The following sections should be retained (with modifications to content to reflect Māori social and academic aspirations):*
  - ♦ *principles/ngā mātāpono;*
  - ♦ *essential skills/ngā tino pūkenga;*
  - ♦ *attitudes and values/ngā waiaro me ngā uara;*
  - ♦ *essential learning areas/ngā tino wāhanga ako;*
  - ♦ *assessment/te aro matawai; and*
  - ♦ *context/te horopaki.*
- 2 *In addition, the following should be added:*
  - ♦ *a clear statement of the purposes of curriculum/marautanga as being to clarify expectations for all New Zealand students and to develop the human capability necessary for a prosperous and inclusive New Zealand society;*
  - ♦ *a section on effective pedagogy;*
  - ♦ *a section on the relationship between the proposed New Zealand curriculum/te Marautanga o Aotearoa and Te*

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<sup>1</sup> See [http://www.tki.org.nz/r/nzcurriculum/draft-curriculum/readings/stk\\_report\\_resources\\_e.php](http://www.tki.org.nz/r/nzcurriculum/draft-curriculum/readings/stk_report_resources_e.php)

- Whāriki (current early childhood education curriculum); and*
- ♦ *a section on the relationship between the proposed New Zealand curriculum/te Marautanga o Aotearoa and qualifications and work.*
- 3 *The principles/ngā mātāpono should be revised so that there is coherence between the purposes of the national curricula/te marautanga o te motu.*
- 4 *The essential skills/ngā tino pūkenga should be modified from the current organisation of 57 essential skills/ngā tino pūkenga in eight groupings, to five essential skills and attitudes (motivation and discernment to use these skills):*
- ♦ *creative and innovative thinking;*
  - ♦ *participation and contribution in communities;*
  - ♦ *relating to others;*
  - ♦ *reflecting on learning;*
  - ♦ *developing self-knowledge; and*
  - ♦ *making meaning from information.*
- 5 *The values outlined in the New Zealand Curriculum Framework and te Anga Marautanga o Aotearoa should be modified and have a more explicit role in frameworks and support materials. The values of the frameworks should not be presented as an exclusive list.*
- 6 *The essential learning areas/ngā wāhanga ako sections of the framework documents should be modified to include the expected outcomes (aims and achievement objectives) from the curriculum statements/ngā tauāki marautanga o Aotearoa. The broad and flexible nature of the achievement objectives should be maintained, but they should be revised to ensure that they:*
- ♦ *reflect the purposes of the curricula/ngā marautanga;*
  - ♦ *are critical for all students*
  - ♦ *better reflect the future-focused curriculum themes of social cohesion, citizenship, education for a sustainable future, bicultural and multicultural awareness, enterprise and innovation and critical literacy.*
- 7 *This recommendation aims to address some of the concerns about the curriculum manageability, crowdedness, and a need to prioritise learning in the national curricula/ ngā marautanga o te motu.*
- 8 *The essential learning area Language and Languages/Te Kōrero me ngā Reo should be two separate learning areas - English/Te Reo Māori and Languages. This separate area would include heritage, community and foreign languages and the learning of English and te reo Māori as second languages. Schools should be required to provide instruction in an additional language for students in years 7 to 10 (except for Māori immersion settings), but it should not be mandatory for all year 7-10 students to learn another language. Generic outcomes for Languages should be developed and included in*

*the proposed New Zealand Curriculum and Te Marautanga o Aotearoa.*

- 9 *In addition to a critique of the above Curriculum Stocktake recommendations, the commentator should raise any further*
  - ♦ *Issues for clarification*
  - ♦ *Issues for consideration*
- 10 *The commentator's recommendations with regard to improvements to the draft New Zealand Curriculum.'*<sup>2</sup>

The commentary will be structured in six sections. Following on from this introduction and context (Section 1), Section 2 considers the extent to which recommendations 1-7 have been addressed in the draft New Zealand Curriculum. In Section 2, the order of some recommendations has been changed to match the layout of the current draft New Zealand Curriculum. Sections 3 and 4 raise issues for clarification and consideration respectively. At the request of the Ministry of Education to give particular attention to Language and Languages (Recommendation 8), this is treated separately in Section 5. The conclusion and recommendations (Section 6) are followed by brief biographical details on the commentator.

## **1.2 Assumption**

The commentator has assumed that the final draft version of the New Zealand Curriculum will become gazetted and, as such, will serve both as the statutory instrument and as the description of the curriculum for professionals and lay persons involved or interested in education.

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<sup>2</sup> Ministry of Education Contract No. 393-2874

## 2. Changes following the *Curriculum Stocktake Report*

This section considers whether, and to what extent, the draft New Zealand Curriculum has addressed the recommendations of *the Curriculum Stocktake Report 2002* (CSR, Ministry of Education, 2002).

### 2.1 Structure and overall content

#### Recommendation 1

*‘The modified versions of the frameworks should be similar in structure to the existing frameworks.*

*The following sections should be retained (with modifications to content to reflect Māori social and academic aspirations):*

- ♦ *principles/ngā mātāpono;*
- ♦ *essential skills/ngā tino pūkenga;*
- ♦ *attitudes and values/ngā waiaro me ngā uara;*
- ♦ *essential learning areas/ngā tino wāhanga ako;*
- ♦ *assessment/te aro matawai; and*
- ♦ *context/te horopaki.’*

The draft New Zealand Curriculum has broadly retained the structure of the existing New Zealand Curriculum Framework, and includes the above elements. However, the recommendation concerning the structure was made in 2002 and therefore does not take into consideration developments in the past four years. The context/te horopaki is currently set out in the Secretary for Education’s *Foreword*. The consequences of retaining the structure have some disadvantages, which are indicated at appropriate points throughout this commentary.

The extent to which the modifications reflect Māori social and academic aspirations is not clear.



## Recommendation 2

*‘In addition, the following should be added:*

- ♦ *a clear statement of the purposes of curriculum/marautanga as being to clarify expectations for all New Zealand students and to develop the human capability necessary for a prosperous and inclusive New Zealand society;*
- ♦ *a section on effective pedagogy;*
- ♦ *a section on the relationship between the proposed New Zealand curriculum/te Marautanga o Aotearoa and Te Whāriki (current early childhood education curriculum); and*
- ♦ *a section on the relationship between the proposed New Zealand curriculum/te Marautanga o Aotearoa and qualifications and work.’*

A new section, *A Vision*, states the overall purpose of education in terms of helping young people to develop the competencies to become: confident, connected, lifelong learners and actively involved.

The section on pedagogy outlines characteristics of effective teaching based on research. However, the presentation of e-learning as a separate, rather than integral, part of the teacher’s pedagogical resource is not in keeping with current educational practice. A more logical order of the list might be:

- ♦ creating a supportive learning environment;
- ♦ providing multiple opportunities to learn, including e-learning;
- ♦ enhancing the relevance of new learning;
- ♦ making connections;
- ♦ facilitating shared learning; and
- ♦ encouraging reflective thought and action.

The section *Planning for Coherent Pathways* outlines progression through the learning phases, and the way in which each contributes to the development of key competencies. This section also includes a useful cross-sector alignment diagram. Given the focus of this document, the explanatory sentence should be rephrased to read: *‘The diagram suggests how the key competencies of the New Zealand curriculum align with those of Te Whāriki and with the proposed tertiary competencies’*.

## 2.2 Principles

### Recommendation 3

*‘The principles/ngä mätäpono should be revised so that there is coherence between the purposes of the national curricula/te marautanga o te motu.’*

*‘Principles are beliefs that guide practice. The broad principles set out in the draft New Zealand Curriculum should guide schools as they design and implement their own curricula.’<sup>3</sup>*

Six main principles are listed. In the interests of consistency, two changes are required:

- ♦ **Excellence:** All students *experience a curriculum that empowers them to learn ...*
- ♦ **Equity:** All students *experience a curriculum that ...*

## 2.3 Values

### Recommendation 5

*‘The values outlined in the New Zealand Curriculum Framework and Te Anga Marautanga o Aotearoa should be modified and have a more explicit role in frameworks and support materials.*

*The values of the frameworks should not be presented as an exclusive list.’*

A separate section on *Values* gives appropriate prominence to this dimension of the curriculum. Whilst some of the values are simply defined (for example: ‘equity, which means fairness and justice’), others include appropriate behaviours or attitudes (for example: ‘excellence: by aiming high and by persevering in the face of difficulties’).

Greater consistency would be achieved by redrafting, for example:

- ♦ **Excellence:** by aiming high and by persevering in the face of difficulties
- ♦ **Innovation, enquiry and curiosity:** *by thinking creatively, critically and reflectively*
- ♦ **Diversity,** as found in our different cultures, languages and heritages: *by demonstrating tolerance (rangimarie) and respect for themselves and others*
- ♦ **Equity,** which means fairness and social justice: *by recognising and resisting discrimination*

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<sup>3</sup> The New Zealand Curriculum : Draft 2006-2007 Principles and Values  
[http://www.tki.org.nz/t/nzcurriculum/draft-curriculum/principles\\_values\\_e.php](http://www.tki.org.nz/t/nzcurriculum/draft-curriculum/principles_values_e.php)

- ♦ **Community and participation for the common good:** *by showing respect for the law and human rights and recognising individual and collective responsibility.*

Respect is a manifestation of the value of the individual and his/her (human) rights.

The recommendation that this is not an exclusive list could be addressed by inserting ‘for example’ before the list and by amending the sentence following the list to read: ‘The specific ways in which these *and other* values find expression...’, or by inserting ‘This list of values is not exclusive.’

However, there is some ambiguity about the purpose of the section, which is addressed in Section 3.1 below.

## 2.4 Essential skills/Key competencies

### Recommendation 4

*‘The essential skills/ngā tino pūkenga should be modified from the current organisation of 57 essential skills/ngā tino pūkenga in eight groupings, to five essential skills and attitudes (motivation and discernment to use these skills).’*

The five key competencies incorporate most of the essential skills included in the current curriculum. However, there is no explicit reference in the key competencies or the achievement outcomes to the following (the numbers relate to the essential skills listed in the current New Zealand Curriculum Framework):

- ♦ become competent in using new information and communication technologies, *including augmented communication for people with disabilities* (4);
- ♦ develop a range of practical life skills, such as *parenting, budgeting<sup>4</sup>, ... transport, and household maintenance skills* (35);
- ♦ develop personal fitness and health through ...good hygiene ..(45);
- ♦ develop basic first aid skills (47);
- ♦ develop relaxation skills (50);
- ♦ demonstrate consideration for others through qualities such as integrity, reliability, trustworthiness, caring or compassion (aroha), fairness, diligence, tolerance (rangimarie) and hospitality or generosity (manaakitanga) (41); and
- ♦ develop the desire and skills to continue learning throughout life (55).

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<sup>4</sup> Financial literacy is mentioned as a ‘critical literacy’, one of the significant themes that schools may use to integrate learning across the key competencies and learning areas (p26).

Although the key competencies are listed centrally in the achievement objectives tables, the requirement that the tables retain the form of the preceding curriculum documents (Recommendation 1) means that the relationship between the learning areas and the key competencies is ignored. The implications of this are further discussed in Section 3.2.

## 2.5 Essential learning areas

### Recommendation 6

*‘The essential learning area/ngä wāhanga ako sections of the framework documents should be modified to include the expected outcomes (aims and achievement objectives) from the curriculum statements/ngä tauāki marautanga o Aotearoa.*

*The broad and flexible nature of the achievement objectives should be maintained, but they should be revised to ensure that they:*

- ♦ *reflect the purposes of the curricula/ngä marautanga;*
- ♦ *are critical for all students;*
- ♦ *better reflect the future-focused curriculum themes of social cohesion, citizenship, education for a sustainable future, bicultural and multicultural awareness, enterprise and innovation and critical literacy.’*

The introduction to the essential learning areas in terms of nature, rationale and structure is clear and helpful for students and the groups of people involved in supporting their learning.

Arts	♦ The rationale needs to be included.
HPE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>♦ The rationale should precede the structure.</li> <li>♦ The learning area should be used: ‘Why study <i>health and physical education</i>?’ ‘How is <i>health and physical education</i> structured?’</li> <li>♦ The footnote reference relating to ‘critical action’ (under Healthy Communities and Environments) needs to be distinct from that relating to Hauora, and the footnote needs to be relocated to p. 16.</li> </ul>
Languages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>♦ The second paragraph appears to belong to the rationale.</li> <li>♦ In addition to the other reasons, learning a language provides students with the tools and strategies to learn further languages.</li> </ul>
Social Sciences	♦ Where would the achievement objectives for the other subjects (classics, sociology, psychology etc) come from?
Technology	♦ Why does technology education, in particular, prepare students for ‘enterprising and innovative’ employment?

Achievement objectives for each learning area (except technology) are included at the end of the Draft New Zealand Curriculum. There is no explicit reference to the fact that

achievement objectives are critical for all students, although the principles of excellence, cultural heritage and equity (p. 9) stress that all students should have the opportunity to learn and achieve.

Although *Designing a School Curriculum* (p. 26) identifies the future-focused curriculum themes of social cohesion, citizenship, education for a sustainable future, bicultural and multicultural awareness, enterprise and innovation, and critical literacy as offering an opportunity to engage students and integrate learning, these links are not made in the achievement objectives.

## **2.6 Manageability of the curriculum**

### **Recommendation 7**

*‘This recommendation aims to address some of the concerns about the curriculum manageability, crowdedness, and a need to prioritise learning in the national curricula/ngä marautanga o te motu.’*

The draft New Zealand Curriculum prescribes key competencies, (essential) learning areas and achievement outcomes, but leaves the content and methodology to the teachers’ professional judgement. In this way, it reduces the pressure on teachers to ‘cover’ curriculum content. However, the organisation of achievement objectives by learning area and level (as required by Recommendation 1 above) contradicts the intention of the new curriculum to give priority to the development of key competencies, and provides little indication of the relationship between key competencies and learning areas. Some suggestions for consideration are made in Section 4.

### 3 Issues for clarification

The draft New Zealand Curriculum represents a reduction in prescribed content and a greater focus on future-focused, competencies-based outcomes. The framework model is intended to allow local variations whilst securing continuity for mobile students. This change also characterises curriculum reform elsewhere (for example, England, the Netherlands, Northern Ireland and Spain).

The document provides valuable information for the use of all those involved in the education of young people. However, the recommendation that: *'The modified versions of the frameworks should be similar in structure to the existing frameworks'* has undermined the effectiveness of the document as a clear road map for learners, schools and their communities, in the following areas:

- ♦ the role of values as drivers of curriculum policy and as an essential part of student learning and development;
- ♦ the relationship between, and place of, key competencies, learning areas and future-focused themes;
- ♦ the role of assessment as an integral part of teaching and learning; and
- ♦ the ways in which the achievement objectives of individual learning areas contribute to the development and mastery of key competencies .

These areas will be addressed in the following sections.

#### 3.1 Principles and values

This section considers the purpose, content and terms used in *Principles* and *Values*.

##### *Purpose*

The purpose of this section is ambiguous. The *Foreword* refers to the *'principles and values on which the curriculum is based'* and the *Overview* (p. 7) reinforces that function, stating that *'the vision, principles and values collectively guide and underpin curriculum decision-making'*. The *Overview* also identifies values as a key element of the curriculum, and the content of the *Values* section focuses primarily on the values to be promoted and fostered by schools. This latter interpretation is supported by the following extract drawn from *The New Zealand Curriculum: Draft 2006-2007 Principles and Values*:

*'All schools teach values, and these are seen in the way teachers and students in a school think and act.*

*The values outlined in the 1993 New Zealand Curriculum Framework have been revised to provide a clearer focus for schools and teachers. This will mean that the curriculum will promote broad values important to all New Zealanders.'*<sup>5</sup>

The confusion might be overcome by:

- ♦ merging the values underpinning the curriculum into a revised section *Principles (and Values) Underpinning the Curriculum*; and
- ♦ addressing the values to be imparted and promoted in schools in a separate section entitled *Values, Attitudes and Dispositions*.

The *Overview* section would then also need revision.

#### *Content*

'Connections' is used to include the relevance of learning, and the involvement of families and communities. These principles might be stronger if separated into 'relevance' and 'partnership' as follows:

- ♦ **Relevance:** All students experience a curriculum that makes connections with their lives within and beyond school.
- ♦ **Partnership:** All students experience a curriculum that engages the support and involvement of their families and communities.

Doing so would also reflect the importance accorded to partnership in paragraph three of the Secretary for Education's *Foreword*.

In its definition of equity, *Principles* includes parts of the values diversity and equity. Consistency between the two sections would be achieved if the text under *Principles* were redrafted to read:

- ♦ **Diversity:** All students experience a curriculum that recognises and affirms their identities, cultures, languages and talents.
- ♦ **Equity:** All students experience a curriculum that identifies and addresses their individual learning needs.

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<sup>5</sup> The New Zealand Curriculum : Draft 2006-2007 Principles and Values  
[http://www.tki.org.nz/t/nzcurriculum/draft-curriculum/principles\\_values\\_e.php](http://www.tki.org.nz/t/nzcurriculum/draft-curriculum/principles_values_e.php)

Two principles underpinning the curriculum appear to have been omitted. The first is the aim to foster a desire, and preparation, for lifelong learning. This is mentioned by the Secretary for Education (para. 2) and, in *Designing a School Curriculum*, school trustees and leaders are encouraged to use the key competencies to:

*'provide a framework for designing learning environments and experiences. By using this framework, schools can ensure that their focus is on preparing their students for ongoing learning and successful living.'* (Ministry of Education, 2006, p29).

The second arises from the curriculum's outcomes-based focus, namely:

*'Each student's ultimate learning success is more important than the covering of particular achievement objectives.'* (Ministry of Education, 2006, p. 28).

A new principle could incorporate both elements, as follows:

**Lifelong learning:** All students experience a curriculum in which the individual's ultimate learning success and preparation for lifelong learning take precedence over the covering of particular achievement objectives.

### 3.2 Curriculum focus and priorities

The relationship between, and place of, key competencies, future-focused themes and learning areas needs to be asserted.

#### *Key competencies*

The *Vision* presents the vital role of education in:

*'[helping] our young people to reach their individual potential and develop the competencies [commentator's emphasis] they will need for further study, work and lifelong learning.'* (Ministry of Education, 2006, p8).

*Planning for Coherent Pathways* states that the transition from early childhood education to school can be facilitated by:

*'an early emphasis on the key competencies [which] will help students appreciate that this new stage [years 1-4] in their learning journey is connected with the stage they have just completed.'* (Ministry of Education, 2006, p32).

These statements indicate that the primary intended outcome of education is a range of key competencies (including knowledge, skills and dispositions), to which the specific



knowledge and skills of the individual learning areas contribute. Yet there are no examples of how this would work out in practice.

#### *Future-focused themes*

*The Curriculum Stocktake Report* stresses the importance of:

*‘the future-focused curriculum themes of social cohesion, citizenship, education for a sustainable future, bicultural and multicultural awareness, enterprise and innovation and critical literacy.’* (Ministry of Education, 2002, Recommendation 5)

Yet, these important themes are only included in *Designing a School Curriculum*, which may not be read by some of the partners, such as parents and employers, who may consider this to be the remit of the school leadership and Boards of Trustees.

#### *Learning areas and achievement objectives*

The draft does not include a description of the nature and purpose of the achievement objectives and the curriculum levels. Given the legal status of the New Zealand Curriculum, and its wide readership, this should be inserted.

The presentation of achievement objectives by level has a number of consequences:

- ♦ it makes it difficult to get a sense of continuity and progression within each learning area;
- ♦ it implies that individual student progression correlates with the year; and
- ♦ it leads to the isolation of Learning Languages (because this starts in year 7) and thereby suggests a different status for this learning area.

Again, the requirement of Recommendation 1 means that the relationship between the achievement objectives and the purposes of the curriculum is limited to the inclusion of the key competencies in a band in the middle of each level (except in Learning Languages). This means that the fundamental change of focus — from knowledge and skills in particular learning areas, to overarching key competencies — is lost, and teachers may therefore fail to adjust their teaching appropriately.

### **3.3 Pedagogy and assessment**

Although the section on *Assessment* acknowledges that *‘the primary purpose of assessment is to improve students’ learning and teachers’ teaching’*, this point would be more strongly made if these two sections were located together.

### **3.4 Workload**

Reformulating their teaching to focus on the key competencies will require an adjustment on the part of many teachers. Although primary teachers may be more familiar with a cross-curricular approach, the work involved in reformulating all learning areas, including those where teachers have relatively less expertise, will be considerable. The burden will be heaviest on those teaching in small schools, where there are fewer staff to share the work..

## 4 Issues for consideration

The following suggestions are intended to make the draft New Zealand Curriculum document clearer for its wide target readership.

### 4.1 Key competencies and achievement objectives

Section 3.2 above argues that the draft New Zealand Curriculum does not make explicit the link between the learning areas and their achievement objectives on the one hand, and the key competencies on the other. This might be addressed by adding a new section ‘How XXX contributes to developing the key competencies’ in the section for each of the learning areas. This should highlight where a learning area may take a lead role or contribute particular elements from the ‘essence’ of the learning area. For example:

Using language, symbols and texts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>♦ English and Languages and would take a leading role.</li><li>♦ The arts: understanding and use of visuals</li><li>♦ Mathematics and science: symbols and graphs</li><li>♦ Social studies (geography): use of symbols and keys</li></ul>
Thinking	Developing research skills and evidence: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>♦ Social studies: distinguish primary from secondary sources, identify potential bias, correlation and causation</li><li>♦ Science: fair test, replication, and generalisability of conclusions</li><li>♦ English: factual and emotional meanings; syllogisms, logical fallacies</li></ul>
Relating to others	Exploring and developing character and interpersonal skills: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>♦ Literature: identify and discuss relationships and characteristics</li><li>♦ The arts, especially drama: role play</li><li>♦ PSHE: relate examples to personal experience and explore consequences of different behaviours</li><li>♦ Social studies: to what extent, if at all, did the character of past leaders influence their relationships with others, and thus historical events?</li></ul>

Such analysis could also offer teachers an overarching framework for teaching in each learning area and for addressing the cross-curricular future based themes. Teachers could work on these themes in progressively more collaborative ways, for example:

1. discuss their learning area's contribution with colleagues and teach their element individually;
2. discuss their learning area's contributions with colleagues and overlap teaching;
3. collaborate on planning and teach agreed elements separately; or
4. collaborate on planning and team-teaching.

Such cross-disciplinary collaboration encourages students to make links between learning areas and thus recognise, reinforce, apply and internalise knowledge and skills.

If the achievement objectives are reformulated in this way, it may not be necessary to include the detailed level-by-level tables currently at the end of the draft New Zealand Curriculum.

## **4.2 Structure and signposting**

Whilst most of the elements required by the recommendations are present in the document, there may be merit in reordering the sections, and clearly grouping them, along the following lines:

### *Foreword*

- ♦ Context

### *Aims and Principles*

- ♦ Vision (p. 8)
- ♦ Principles (and Values) Underpinning the Curriculum (p. 9 with relevant parts of p.10)

Everyone needs to understand and endorse these if education is to succeed.

### *The Learning Experience*

- ♦ Key Competencies (p.11)
- ♦ Learning Areas (overview page and detailed descriptions, pp.13-23)
- ♦ Achievement Objectives and Curriculum Levels (an introductory statement on their purpose and nature, and the graphic on p. 34. Detailed achievement objectives, if retained, remain at the end.)
- ♦ Future-based Themes (extracted from p. 26)
- ♦ (Values and) Attitudes and Dispositions (from p. 10)
- ♦ Effective Pedagogy (pp. 24-25)
- ♦ Purposeful Assessment (pp. 30-31)

These elements are of prime importance for schools, students and parents, as they can only be achieved by effective cooperation between them.

### *Designing a School Curriculum*

- ♦ Designing a School Curriculum (the text currently on p. 26, excluding the detailed paragraphs on themes, which would be relocated under ‘The Learning Experience’ above)
- ♦ School Curriculum Links to the Schooling Strategy and NEGs
- ♦ Planning with a Focus on Outcomes
- ♦ Planning for the Development of the Key Competencies
- ♦ Planning for Coherent Pathways

These are of primary concern to school leadership and teachers.

Changing the format of the titles or otherwise distinguishing between sections, will make the document easier to navigate.

## **4.3 Graphics**

The draft New Zealand Curriculum includes some excellent graphics but these are not always used to best effect.

The first graphic (p. 7), does not clarify which are principles and which are values and, although the colours represent the learning areas, this is not immediately clear to those unfamiliar with the curriculum, such as new parents/caregivers.

The graphic on p. 31 is an admirable representation of ‘*the different groups of people involved in supporting students’ learning*’. It is a pity that this does not have greater prominence earlier in the document, particularly since the endorsement and support of these groups is critical for the successful implementation of the curriculum. This is referred to in the Secretary for Education’s *Foreword*. The ‘information’ referred to could be interpreted to include more than assessment information. It would illustrate the (proposed) principle of partnership (see 3.1 above), and send a strong message about the engagement of, and collaboration between, the different groups.

#### **4.4 The ‘Big Picture’**

The draft New Zealand Curriculum is, of necessity, a complex document that contains a great deal of detail. The communication of its message to the wider world would be easier if the constituent elements (aims, skills, learning areas, values/attitudes and dispositions, learning experiences and assessment) and their interrelationship were outlined on a single page. Such a ‘Big Picture’ would help:

- ◆ demonstrate the logical progression from the aim (vision), through the process (learning areas, achievement objectives, pedagogy, assessment), to the outcomes (key competencies, attitudes and dispositions);
- ◆ students, parents and members of the community to understand the relevance of individual subjects and learning experiences;
- ◆ teachers to direct their teaching at developing students’ key competencies and attitudes/dispositions; and
- ◆ school leaders to design a curriculum adapted to local needs, but which prepares all students for their future in New Zealand and beyond.

An example of such a Big Picture is that prepared for the proposed Northern Ireland curriculum (see Appendix).

## 5 Language and Languages

### Recommendation 8

*‘The essential learning area Language and Languages/te Kōrero me ngā Reo should be two separate learning areas - English/te reo Māori and Languages. This latter separate area would include heritage, community and foreign languages and the learning of English and te reo Māori as second languages. Schools should be required to provide instruction in an additional language for students in years 7 to 10 (except for Māori immersion settings), but it should not be mandatory for all year 7-10 students to learn another language.*

*Generic outcomes for Languages should be developed and included in the proposed New Zealand Curriculum and te Marautanga o Aotearoa.’*

The draft New Zealand Curriculum creates two separate learning areas: English and Language Learning, and outlines the nature, rationale and structure of each.

### 5.1 Issues for clarification

The provision of Language Learning is complex due, in part, to the different dimensions, as follows:

- ♦ the language spoken by students may be their mother tongue, language(s) of habitual use or second (third etc) language. The ability to speak a language does not mean that the student is literate, that is, has developed reading and writing skills in the language;
- ♦ a teacher may use a (‘national/official’) first, a second or a foreign language as a medium of instruction; and
- ♦ a teacher may teach a first, second or a foreign language to promote literacy, or as a gateway to culture and literature.

#### 5.1.1 Categorisation of languages

The *first language* is usually the national or official language, of which there may be several. In New Zealand, this includes te reo Māori, English and (since 2006) New Zealand Sign Language<sup>6</sup>. A student may have one of these as a mother tongue, but for some students (for example, Pasifika students) any of these will be a *second language*.

For languages other than the mother tongue, a distinction is made between a *second language* and a *foreign language*. The former is one that is commonly used in the host

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<sup>6</sup> No information on (proposed) provision for the teaching of New Zealand Sign Language in schools was available for this commentary..

community, as a national or official language, whilst the latter is not. Hence, in the New Zealand context, English may be a *second language* for mother tongue speakers of te reo Māori, for Pasifika students or for Pakeha students from non-Anglophone countries. Similarly, te reo Māori may be a *second language* for Pasifika students or for Pakeha students. Learners of a *second language* would normally be supported by access to locally produced written and spoken media, as well as to individuals in the community. Other languages taught in schools, including community languages (for example, Sāmoan, Cook Islands Māori, Niue, Tongan, Tokelauan) and international languages (for example, Japanese, Chinese, Korean, French, German, Spanish), would be categorised as *foreign languages*. For these students, language models would be less readily available.

### **5.1.2 Teaching of languages**

The heterogeneity of classes, in terms of language background, poses a particular challenge to teachers of languages.

#### *English and te reo Māori 1*

English or te reo Māori is the medium of instruction in mainstream and in Māori medium education respectively. As a distinct learning area, it is the vehicle for developing literacy and communication skills and for exploring literature and culture. Whilst it is the mother tongue of most students in the respective schools, teachers need to be aware that, for some, it is a *second language* and therefore specific explanations and assistance may be required. Teachers in other learning areas need to help students in both groups master the specific vocabulary and forms of expression of their discipline(s).

#### *Te reo Māori and English 2*

In Māori medium education and mainstream schools, students may learn English or te reo Māori respectively as a *second language*. For example, a Māori student who speaks fluently but has not developed literacy skills in te reo Māori may sit alongside a Pakeha student with no prior knowledge at all. Under these circumstances, teachers need to maintain the interest of, and challenge, the former, whilst not demotivating the latter.

#### *Community and international languages*

A teacher in one of these classes may have students whose mother tongue is te reo Māori, English, the language being taught or a fourth language.



### *Immersion classes*

Immersion classes are generally offered to promote rapid mastery of, and confidence in, the use of the national/official language (as a *second language*). *Foreign languages* may be taught through immersion, for example, to students deemed to be particularly gifted, who want to learn an additional foreign language within a limited time.

### *Learning languages in conjunction with English*

Bilingual classes may be offered to promote confidence and to build on existing literacy, or to develop literacy in English as well as biliteracy. In some cases, a bilingual approach may need to be adopted in the English lesson:

*'... The prior knowledge, first language, and culture of each student should be respected and incorporated in English programmes. Where students have some facility in the first language, they should initially be encouraged to explore tasks in that language, moving between their first language and English. ...'* (National Curriculum Statement for English, p. 15)

### **5.1.3 Setting achievement objectives**

The draft New Zealand Curriculum includes generic outcomes for Language Learning, which are intended to apply to all languages (other than English). In the light of the purposes, categories and contexts outlined above, it is understandable that the achievement objectives are very general. However, the assumption that all students should learn to master all four skills (listening, speaking, reading and writing) may not be realistic, given the range of language objectives espoused by learners, including basic survival phrases for holiday use; speaking/listening skills for informal communication; reading foreign language texts, say as part of history studies; and preparation for a career using languages such as translation or interpreting.

### **5.1.4 Language Learning and key competencies**

The way in which Language Learning contributes to the key competencies is broadly sketched below.

Using language, symbols and texts

Languages are systems which are organised to achieve meaning. By being able to communicate in an additional language, students gain access to broader fields of knowledge and so extend their creative and critical literacies.

Students recognise and respond to different linguistic and cultural clues by comparing, interpreting and negotiating meaning.

Thinking	Language learning to develop skills to learn further languages. Students gain new ways of thinking about, questioning, and interpreting the world and their place in it. Students identify, explain, apply and compare language features, conventions and patterns and understand languages as systems.
Managing self	As students move between and respond to different languages and cultural practices, they are challenged to consider their own identities and preconceptions.
Relating to others;	Language as communication of own ideas and to understand those of others. Students use their knowledge to convey meaning effectively, confidently and responsibly in a range of contexts.
Participation and contribution in communities;	Students acquire knowledge, skills and attitudes that equip them for living in a world of diverse peoples, languages and cultures (and that promote inclusion/ integration of newcomers to their own community). Students recognise, compare, apply, reflect on and analyse cultural features, conventions and patterns and understand cultures as systems.

## 5.2 Issues for consideration

In a previous report, the commentator criticised the *'the relatively low priority given to foreign language learning, which remains a non-statutory requirement'* (Le Métais, 2002, Section 7), **because it was inconsistent with the claim** that:

*'The New Zealand Curriculum Framework and Statements ... [promote] new emphases in learning areas which are important to the country's health and growth such as ... second language learning...'* (NZCF p. 1)

However, the commentator also pointed out that:

*'New Zealand is not alone; foreign language learning is also under-represented in other Anglophone countries, especially when compared with European countries. Four explanations spring to mind:*

- 1 *given the prevalence of English in international communications, there is no 'obvious' foreign language for Anglophone students*
- 2 *a similar prevalence of English in [youth] culture means that the affective and social support for foreign language learning is diminished for Anglophone students*
- 3 *language learning is labour intensive and many countries have a shortage of suitably qualified teachers*
- 4 *the conflicting objectives of foreign languages for communication and as a grounding for further linguistic and literary studies mean that only a minority of students experience real success.'* (Le Métais, 2002, Section 3.2).

These circumstances have not changed. Whilst the draft New Zealand Curriculum has introduced the requirement that schools offer a language in years 7 to 10, learning is not compulsory for students. The language offering depends on the availability of suitably

qualified teachers, and take-up depends in part on the perceived usefulness and difficulty of the language(s) concerned.

In order to promote take-up, and in particular of te reo Māori, consideration might be given to offering some flexibility, for example, a modified course consisting of listening and speaking skills.

## 6. Conclusion and recommendations

Overall, the draft New Zealand Curriculum incorporates most of the recommendations of the *Curriculum Stocktake Report* (Ministry of Education, 2002), and reflects international developments in curriculum design: less prescription, a future-based orientation and competency-based outcomes. With appropriate support for its implementation, it has the potential to provide a sound and flexible learning programme for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

The draft goes a long way towards encapsulating the curriculum requirements within a brief document, but the need to retain the structure of its predecessor and, in particular, the achievement objectives, obscures the competency-oriented focus of the new curriculum. In particular, there is a conflict between the stated aim to help young people ‘*develop the competencies they will need for further study, work and lifelong learning*’ and the description of intended outcomes in terms of learning area achievement outcomes.

### **It is therefore recommended that:**

- ♦ consideration be given to reformulating the achievement objectives primarily in terms of the key competencies, to which the knowledge and skills of specific learning areas contribute, as outlined in Section 4.1;
- ♦ the document be restructured as outlined in Section 4.2;
- ♦ the use of graphics be reviewed; and
- ♦ an overview diagram be included, which demonstrates the relationship between the elements of the curriculum (aims, key competencies, themes, learning areas, achievement outcomes, values/attitudes and pedagogy/assessment).

## 7. References

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## 8. The Commentator: [Dr Joanna Le Métais](#)

Dr Joanna Le Métais is an independent consultant, writer and speaker. Her main area of work is comparative analysis and evaluation of education policy, implementation and reform. She has carried out assignments in over 15 countries, most recently in Australia, the United Arab Republic and the Netherlands. In 2002, Dr Le Métais carried out an [international critique](#) of the Curriculum Framework and the seven National Curriculum Statements as part of the New Zealand Curriculum Stocktake.

Prior to 2004, Dr Le Métais was Head of International Project Development at the [National Foundation for Educational Research](#) in England and Wales. She was Head of [EURYDICE at NFER](#) from 1984-1997 and from 1996-2003, she devised and directed [INCA](#), the International Review of Curriculum and Assessment Frameworks, an ongoing study of education systems and organisation in (now) 20 countries, sponsored by the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority. She has conducted *INCA* thematic studies on [values and aims](#), [upper secondary education](#) and [trends in primary education](#). Other projects include a World Bank review of primary curriculum reform in Vietnam, and an analysis of school curriculum differences across the UK and Northern Ireland. In 1999-2000, she conducted a review of educational continuity between England and selected locations in Australia, Canada, New Zealand and the USA for the Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

Dr Le Métais' previous work experience includes teaching, school management, local education authority administration, examining, research, and quality assessment in higher education. She is a qualified teacher and holds the degrees of Bachelor of Education, Master of Arts (Public and Social Administration) and Doctor of Philosophy. She was awarded the degree of [Doctor of Education honoris causa](#) by Brunel University in 2000.

# APPENDIX

## The "Big Picture" of the Primary Curriculum

