

# Editorial: Keeping pace with curriculum reform

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New Zealand is currently undergoing significant curriculum reform aimed at modernising the educational framework to better meet the needs of students in a rapidly changing world. The national curriculum, which includes *The New Zealand Curriculum*, for English-medium education, and *Te Marautanga o Aotearoa*, for Māori-medium education, is being updated in phases. These updates are intended to keep the curriculum relevant, and make it clearer and easier to use for educators, parents, and students alike.

This volume of *Curriculum Matters* explores the process of curriculum reform and ways in which teachers can keep pace with the changes being implemented. The refresh of *The New Zealand Curriculum* refresh forms the backdrop of several of the articles in this volume, while other articles remind us that curriculum development, reform, and refinement is an ongoing process around the world and at all levels of the education system. Keeping up with the pace of these reforms is crucial to ensure that students are equipped with the skills and knowledge necessary to thrive in an increasingly complex and digital world.

Curriculum development often emphasises critical thinking, creativity, and adaptability, which are essential for future success (Hughson, 2022). New curricula incorporate current research and teaching practices, and to that end this volume presents research that can inform curriculum design by Hong and Brown, Pearce, and Tatebe and Valdivia, while McKenney et al. offer strategies that curriculum designers themselves can use to develop high-quality curricula. New curricula also aim to maintain or improve educational equity, ensuring that all students, regardless of their background, and have access to high-quality education that reflects contemporary societal needs and values, as McKenney et al. discuss. However, the articles by Tatebe and Valdivia, and Rojas-Estrada et al. remind us that exactly whose needs and values are, or are not, reflected in curriculum is often contentious, politicised, or dependent on the particular teacher.

Two pieces in this volume, by Webster and Terreni and McNaughton, are offered as practice notes for teachers. Practice notes acknowledge that what

is taught and what is learnt in classrooms hangs critically upon how teachers interact with, interpret, operationalise, and otherwise put curriculum into practice. Staying current with curriculum changes can foster a culture of continuous improvement among teachers, encouraging them to adopt innovative teaching practices that reflect the latest educational research and methodologies. The practice notes complement the articles by Pearce and Tatebe and Valdivia, who show how the experience and professional knowledge of teachers can be a valuable resource to inform curriculum design. This volume of *Curriculum Matters* ultimately suggests that a proactive and reciprocal approach to the design and adoption of new curricula benefits the entire educational ecosystem, from students and teachers to the broader community.

The volume opens with an article by Thomas C. Pearce, who looks explicitly at the curriculum reform taking place in New Zealand. His article, “Obstacles and Opportunities in the New Zealand Curriculum Refresh: An Illustrative Case Study of the Enactment of Formative Assessment in a New Zealand Primary School”, begins by discussing the ever-increasing alignment between curriculum and assessment. He argues that assessment practices and guidelines are a crucial consideration in curriculum reform because what teachers assess, and how they assess, shapes the taught curriculum. Drawing on observations in one primary school classroom, along with interviews with the teacher, Pearce highlights some of the potential obstacles to enacting assessment in the way that it is conceived in the ongoing *New Zealand Curriculum* refresh. He concludes with some specific recommendations for how assessment could be positioned to better achieve curriculum goals and support effective pedagogy, based on how teachers are likely to enact the assessment guidelines in the refreshed *New Zealand Curriculum*.

Shifting focus to Latin America, Elizabeth-Guadalupe Rojas-Estrada, Rosa García-Ruiz and Ignacio Aguaded examine the different approaches to integrating media and information literacy (MIL) across Latin America in their article “Digital Polis and Citizenship: Towards the Integration of Media Literacy in the Latin American Curriculum”. The authors document changes to the conceptualisation of MIL in curricula of 15 different countries, documenting how shifting priorities and curriculum trends impacted the ways in which citizenship, media, and literacy were framed in curriculum documents over time. The article raises questions around the values and understandings

that contribute to curriculum development and reform, while also offering an understanding of the challenges associated with designing and implementing curriculum changes for complex, fluid, topics such as MIL and citizenship.

Taking a step back, the article from Susan McKenney, Jan van den Akker, Ryan Wakamiya, Andreas Beer, Yvonne Zijlstra, and Edlyn Chao, explores the key elements of curriculum development practices. “Curriculum Design at Scale: How Developers Actually Work” examines how curriculum developers enact essential aspects of curriculum design that are supported by the literature. There are potential issues raised in a disconnect between curriculum designers and curriculum practitioners, as well as the availability of assessment expertise to inform curriculum design. They suggest that productive educational outcomes depend on the proficiency of curriculum designers to implement their vision clearly and effectively. In the context of curriculum change and reform, the authors provide valuable insight into the perspectives of those who actually design curricula that are intended for large-scale use, and how they carry out that design.

Jennifer Tatebe and Lina Valdivia pick up a theme also considered by Pearce and by Rojas-Estrada et al.: that curriculum extends beyond the frameworks, syllabi, content, guides or materials discussed by McKenney et al. in their article. In “It’s Who You Are And Who You Get: The Chosen Curriculum”, Tatebe and Valdivia present findings from focus-group discussions with teachers at four large state secondary schools in Auckland, New Zealand. The authors built on their previous research into how inequality was positioned in *The New Zealand Curriculum* (Tatebe et al., 2019) to consider how teachers in a range of subject areas include inequality in their taught curriculum. They develop the concept of a “chosen” curriculum to explain how teachers in all subjects included inequality as a topic through which to teach other curriculum objectives. The result is significant inconsistency in what and how students in New Zealand learn about inequality, as the authors remind us with the title of their article: it’s “who you get” as a teacher. Tatebe and Valdivia suggest that the current round of curriculum changes in New Zealand present an opportunity to address this inconsistency through the more explicit inclusion of learning about social, economic, and political inequality.

Bookending this section of the journal is a contribution to research on the effective teaching of reading and writing from Meiyang Hong and Gavin

Brown, which is very topical in reform of *The New Zealand Curriculum*. Rather than looking at teacher practice, as other authors in this volume have done, Hong and Brown instead focus on students. “Reading Comprehension Benefits from Being Taught to Write: The Secondary Students’ Perspective” adapts an instrument for student evaluation of highly accomplished mathematics teaching (Irving, 2004) to analyse data collected on student perceptions of reading and writing, and student reading comprehension performance in New Zealand secondary schools. They offer evidence that students who perceive it to be important to learn writing have greater self-efficacy in reading, which improves their performance in reading comprehension assessments. The authors argue that teaching writing, and the integration of writing and reading, supports better outcomes in reading comprehension.

The next two articles serve as practice notes that are designed to support teachers who are already navigating the recent changes to curricula. Practice notes help make clear ways to develop theoretical ideas that exist in curriculum into decision making and planning practices. Practice notes also serve as an impetus for teachers to reflect on their practice, developing their own attitudes towards research-based findings (Pareja Roblin et al., 2014).

In the first practice piece, Jack Webster examines digital citizenship education (DCE) in *The New Zealand Curriculum*, highlighting connections that can be made to digital citizenship across the curriculum. The practice notes article builds on analysis presented by Webster (2023) that conceptualised a postdigital approach to digital citizenship aimed at producing new, innovative knowledge for digital futures. In this volume, Webster details possible opportunities to engage in speculative DCE in each of the learning areas. This practice notes piece serves as a reminder of the need for schools, teachers, researchers, curriculum developers, and policymakers to keep pace with ongoing change brought about by digital developments.

The second practice notes piece brings us back to New Zealand to draw attention to developments to enriching local curriculum (ELC) opportunities and details strategies for teachers to create positive ELC experiences. Drawing on their research findings, Lisa Terreni and Esther McNaughton provide guidance in terms of planning, communication, and resources, and the piece offers recommendations for future professional development. This final article offers a timely and informative guide for teachers and gallery educators,

especially those looking to enhance their pedagogical awareness for early childhood education visits to museum and art galleries.

The editorial team would like to thank all the authors and researchers for their work in the curriculum space. We would like to extend a deep thank you to our reviewers whose time and expertise are fundamental to the production of this volume. We want to show our gratitude to the team working behind the scenes to prepare this volume of *Curriculum Matters*, especially Juan Ochoa Lopez who has managed the administrative and logistical aspects of the journal, and John Huria and David Ellis of NZCER for their ongoing support for the journal. Lastly, we want to thank NZCER for the opportunity to prepare this volume of *Curriculum Matters* during this pivotal moment in curriculum reform. We hope the ideas presented in this volume will support and inspire teachers and educators as they adapt to the evolving demands and complexities of the educational landscape.

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