Editorial: Competition or Collaboration?

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In many minds, competition and collaboration are uneasy bedfellows. While competition on the sports field may be regarded as healthy, and rivalry in the classroom an acceptable spur to progress, for some children, when competition is writ large and occurs between schools, educational research groups or tertiary institutions, it seems to be much more problematic. In a recent Fulbright Newsletter (August, 1998), Helen Ladd, Professor of Public Policy at Duke University, observes that in New Zealand, "the introduction of parental choice ... led schools to compete for students, and this competition between schools is happening on a more dramatic scale than in other countries." She also observed that reforms like those under Tomorrow's Schools "create *prominent losers*" [emphasis added].Therein may lie the key. If there are such losers (unpopular schools having to close down, through dropping rolls; tertiary institution faculties being decimated because of fickle student demand) they are painfully exposed and publicly vulnerable.

This point is well picked up in the first article in this *Annual Review*. Peter Roberts and Michael Peters, the joint authors of an article in last year's issue on the Tertiary Education Green Paper, continue their incisive commentary on the Tertiary Education White Paper, released in 1998. In some penetrating comment on such issues as the favouring of new government subsidies for private training establishments, and the proposed sharp reduction in EFTS-based research funding to tertiary institutions, along with a corresponding increase in unpredictable, contestable research funding, they see ahead a worrying increase in central control and a major loss of institutional autonomy. They argue that competitive individualism is a very weak adhesive to secure the neoliberal goal of "social cohesion". Wide scale adoption "involves a reconfiguration of the notion of community: the replacement of an ethic

of collective care with the apparently paradoxical idea of people being bound together by their commitment to serving their own individual (competitive and economic) interests" (p. 23). A sharp paradox indeed.

There are a further eight articles in this issue, most of them specially-commissioned, and all subject to rigorous peer review prior to publication. I believe the journal has become one of international standing, with a substantial circulation, both in New Zealand and overseas. Publication on the last page of the names of members of the Editorial Board, including two from outside New Zealand's shores (both former Professors and Heads of Department of the School of Education at Victoria University of Wellington), can only enhance its credentials.

Each article tackles an important policy matter which has become current during 1998, or deals with a significant new piece of research with strong policy implications. The *Annual Review* is an important vehicle to allow the staff of the School of Education of Victoria University of Wellington to express their views, but about half the articles this year come from outside the university, making a good blend. One article is from a graduate student at the university, and the policy of encouraging such students to work up a policy paper submitted during the year into a full journal article will be continued, as it provides a valuable (if demanding!) way in which students can get themselves rapidly into print, and come to grips with the somewhat stringent parameters of academic publishing.

In the second article, Ken Rae deals with a troublesome problem, that of expulsions and suspensions from school, whose incidence has risen markedly in recent years. Following a detailed account of legislative changes designed to deal with the situation, he embarks on a more personal appraisal, and notes a clash between the "market forces" and the "education network" paradigm in handling difficult students. It reinforces the thesis with which this editorial opens, within another educational setting.

Next, Clare Wells describes the context within which the early childhood report *Future Directions: Early Childhood in New Zealand* was launched, and notes the strong lead taken by the NZEI Te Riu Roa in promoting it, in the face of some Government reluctance to recognise its validity. The article outlines the aims of the project, describes the process undertaken to develop the report, and highlights its key findings, goals and recommendations. It concludes with a broad overview of the impact of the report in shaping Government policy direction.

The Special Education 2000 policy package (SE2000), introduced by the last National Government in 1996 and taken forward by the Coalition Government, makes provision for a Special Education Grant (SEG) to cater for children with moderate Special Education Needs (SEN). The policy is still in the process of being implemented, but Margaret Chatfield, parent of a special needs child and an experienced teacher in Special Education, examines whether it enables schools to best meet the needs of those students with moderate SEN. Conclusions reached in this review suggest that the SEG poses difficulties for school communities in resourcing children with SEN equitably, because the policy allows different interpretations by stakeholders, both with regard to the identification of the target population and the use of funding.

Mark Cleary and Keith Sullivan build on a very topical research article on bullying in last year's *Annual Review*, with a further practical contribution which addresses squarely a very worrying problem. This year's article is based on the use of a hypothetical scenario, "On the Bus", which focuses the attention of students on the dynamics of bullying, and through a reflective process, encourages them to think about, and discuss, the outcomes of bullying for those involved, for the school, and for the community at large. This novel approach has strong policy implications, as befits articles in a policy review journal.

Then follow two substantial and wide-ranging articles, from a feminist perspective. First, Jane Gilbert examines the "equity" statements which have appeared in the New Zealand national curriculum documents published over the last 5-10 years, focussing in particular on the statements on girls and science. She examines the origins of these statements, points out some of the issues which arise when equity issues are thought about, and in her summing up, finds past efforts somewhat problematic. Then Janet Davies examines the origins of the newly-introduced technology curriculum, the development and nature of the curriculum statement, and the progress to date of curriculum implementation in schools. She questions the goal of preparing students to become innovators for a future conceptualised in terms of current ideology, namely, national competition in a global market, and makes a plea for a better understanding of the role of social organisation and cultural values in technological change. Our opening thesis is restated in another setting.

The final two articles deal with assessment issues. David Philips presents a factual account of national developments in assessment policy during 1998 and early 1999, as it relates to the compulsory

education sector. Three different kinds of monitoring of school effectiveness are considered. The second half of the article focuses on the Government's recent Green Paper, *Assessment for Success in Primary Schools*, and some unresolved policy issues and possible future directions for a comprehensive national assessment policy are discussed.

In the final article, Terry Locke and Cedric Hall provide an outline of the development and trialling during 1998 of a standards-based alternative to the unit standard system in Year 12 English, a system which the design team considered to be flawed on both pedagogical and administrative grounds. This paper reports on the structure and organisation of the trial English Study Design (ESD) programme, its design philosophy, the assessment procedures employed, the results of the evaluation, and the implications of all of these for the Government's Achievement 2001 initiative.

Finally, the reference section, which gives this review journal its unique flavour, contains once again a comprehensive and up-to-date listing of education-related theses, a distinctive feature of last year's *Annual Review*, downloaded and abbreviated from the fully-catalogued records held on the New Zealand Bibliographic Network (NZBN) mainframe database. All have been re-keyworded using the Australian Public Affairs Information Service (APAIS) thesaurus to make them comparable with the other entries in the bibliography. In all, the bibliography includes 101 theses presented in 1997 and not included in last year's *Annual Review*, and another 132 which were presented in 1998 and had been entered on the NZBN database by 31 December, 1998. The rest of the bibliography, totalling 712 entries in all, and with an expanded section on health-related topics, is made up of difficult-to-locate references drawn from the INNZ databases, including various addresses on educational topics, conference papers, as well as many journal articles. Feedback suggests that this is a particularly useful section for graduate students searching for background literature in thesis preparation.

The unique features of the *Annual Review* – the diary of news headlines and issues from the education sector achieving prominence in 1998, which provide an essential underpinning, and the section reporting the process of legislative change in education, drawn from parliamentary bulletins and other official sources – continue to provide a valuable historical record.

There should be something here to whet every appetite.