

Editorial: Anyone for a Paradigm?

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A term which has recently become almost ubiquitous (but not necessarily well understood) in the language of educational research is that of *paradigm*. Indeed, this issue of the *Annual Review* could almost be termed the “issue of the paradigm”, as no fewer than five authors make reference to the term, several at some length.

Perhaps the most extended reference, and a very helpful explanation of its origins, is included in the second article, dealing with developments in special education extending over several decades, with particular reference to the development of a cadre of Resource Teachers Learning and Behaviour in 2000. The four authors, Charlotte Thomson, Don Brown, Elizabeth Jones and Elizabeth Manins chart the way in which people with disabilities are regarded in our society in terms of a series of paradigm shifts, involving a change in perspective from one of *segregation*, representing a functional limitations perspective, to one of *inclusion*, reflecting an ecological approach.

They chart the origins of the word paradigm from the work in the physical sciences of Thomas Kuhn, who used the term to mean a *world view*, “a set of explicit or implicit presuppositions or basic beliefs used by scientists to provide coherence to their picture of the world and how it works.” A paradigm is thus an overarching concept, much more pervasive than a theory or model. The authors also cite Skrtic, who described a paradigm as “a special lens which may enable us to see the world more clearly.” A paradigm shift occurs when we change the old lens for a new one which helps us to view the world in a different way. Kuhn emphasises that paradigms shift largely because of socio-political factors. But while in the physical sciences only one paradigm is likely to receive currency at any given time, in the social sciences several different paradigms can coexist simultaneously and compete for dominance. Sometimes this coexistence is not peaceful.

In their article, the authors attribute the somewhat halting progress of special education over the past decades to the multi-paradigmatic nature of the social sciences and the consequent clashes of opinion and tension that result from it. They proceed to outline the rationale and structure of the new training programme for Resource Teachers Learning and Behaviour, and consider some of the remaining tensions which affect the implementation of the role.

In the opening article, Richard Watkins also picks up the concept of paradigm, arguing that educators, as they face the uncertain future, must be mindful of the multiple purposes with which they are engaged and the rationales that underpin our education systems. He argues for a diversity of approaches to education that “recognise the validity, applicability, and appropriateness of different pathways, paradigms, and behaviours.” Education is education for life, and the massive technological changes now occurring, resulting in the globalisation of knowledge, will demand an increasing capacity to adapt, change and take bold new directions in the way in which information is presented and utilised. The author concludes by sketching an agenda for the future of educational institutions and curriculum offerings.

In a fascinating overview of early childhood education over the past 100 years, Helen May introduces us to her term “gaze”, which in some ways is a paradigm in disguise. In her sweeping survey from 1900 to the present day, the “century of the child”, she considers various ways in which early childhood has been viewed by society (the “gazes”). She examines what constructions people have placed upon “before five” childhood and its institutions for both Maori and Pakeha, and outlines the present context of early childhood services, sited amidst new economic and political discourses which are transforming the role of the state.

Three authors from Massey University, William Tunmer, Jane Prochnow and James Chapman tackle the knotty issue of educational research methodologies, and argue strongly that multiple paradigms should be allowed to coexist, that quantitative and qualitative research styles should not be seen as enemies, (as they have historically been in some quarters), and concur with Elliot Eisner when he maintains that “many methodological voices should be heard.” To demonstrate this stance they consider diverse views on literacy, arguing that it is possible to develop a general theory on how children learn to read (and write), and at the same time take full cognizance of the social context in which learning takes place and literacy develops.

Carol Langton brings a teaching perspective to the matter of curriculum reform, in this case in the Visual Arts, and notes that in Art, too, civilisation down the ages has been subjected to a whole series of paradigm shifts, from the 14th century depiction of perspective, through abstract art to modernism, and thence to present day post-modernism. In the light of this survey, she argues that there are deficiencies in the Visual Arts component of the present draft Arts in the New Zealand Curriculum document which need to be addressed.

Richard Manning takes a long hard look at the need for school boards of trustees to acquaint themselves much more fully with local historical antecedents of present day situations when National Administration Guidelines (NAGs) are being implemented, in particular in schools enrolling large proportions of Maori students or situated in areas of predominantly Maori manawhenua. Good intentions are not enough. Using a case study methodology in a particular school and charting its tensions and tribulations over many decades, he argues for a much broader and more understanding consultation process with the local community. The mutual obligations of the Treaty of Waitangi need to be taken seriously.

Tricia Chapman continues the school administration theme with a study of the Tomorrow's Schools reforms, and sees considerable confusion existing as to exactly *who* is the employer of teachers, the board of trustees or the principal. She considers whether the proposed requirements for the performance management of teachers are consistent with the self-managing school framework, and evaluates the effectiveness of the regulations in enhancing teacher performance.

The present position of private schools is considered by Colin McGeorge, of the University of Canterbury. He provides evidence to show that the number of private schools has declined over the last decade, prompting the Chief Review Officer to express concern. At the same time, the non-government school sector as a whole has grown, with many private schools, including recently established ones, integrating into the state system. The future size of the non-government sector and movement within it will depend on the level of state aid and the new government's willingness to act on recent amendments to the Integration Act.

Keith Sullivan's article adds to the growing body of literature on bulk funding of schools, now termed the Fully Funded Option. His strong conclusion is that it is the injection of extra money, rather than the mechanism of bulk funding itself, which has allowed some schools

to enhance their offerings. He also argues that in having taken on the responsibilities of governorship (including becoming employers of their children's teachers), parents have been diverted from the more important role of engagement with their children's learning, in partnership with teachers.

Finally, Cedric Hall examines the implications for standards-based assessment of the National Certificate in Educational Achievement, due to be introduced in 2002, focusing in particular on the reliability of assessment against separate achievement standards, and the pedagogical implications of the policy of non-aggregation. Assessment against separate standards is unlikely to yield sufficiently reliable results to satisfy public credibility, and may lead to a "bricks without mortar" approach to course design, delivery and assessment. The paper also argues that there are better ways whereby internal and external assessments could be blended within a standards-based system so that the strengths of each approach to assessment are emphasised.

There are three articles this year from graduate students at Victoria University, and the present policy of encouraging such students to redraft an A+ course assignment submitted during the year as a full journal article is proving very successful. I believe it should be continued, as it provides an excellent entrée into the world of academia for some who might not otherwise have the motivation or opportunity.

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*. In all, the bibliography this year contains 679 entries, including 335 recent theses presented at New Zealand universities which were entered on the NZBN database by December 31, 1999, but not included in last year's *Annual Review*.

The unique features of the *Annual Review* – the diary of news headlines and issues from the education sector achieving prominence in 1999, which set the review articles in context, 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.

As it completes its ninth year of publication, I believe *the New Zealand Annual Review of Education* is now a prominent flagship of educational scholarship for the School of Education at Victoria University, as it marks the end of the old millennium and looks forward to the challenges of the new.