

# Editorial: Change is the new condition of our educational lives

Looking back on 2009, it would seem that change was the new condition of our educational lives. This is perhaps unsurprising given that the new National-led government elected in November 2008 was voted in on a promise of educational reforms and took up its reins just when the global recession started to hit New Zealand's shores.

The papers in this issue consider some of the changes experienced within the education sector during the first year of National's term in office, as well as link back to historical issues and forward to possibilities for change in the future. In keeping with the kaupapa of this journal, the papers provide both commentaries on system-level policy as well as analysis of the implementation of policies in specific sectors from early childhood to tertiary.

Setting a historical context for the current changes, the first paper by **Cathy Wylie** provides a 20-year overview of the impact of the self-managing schools policy introduced through the *Tomorrow's School's* reforms in 1988. Wylie argues that contrary to the intent of the self-managing schools' policy to improve education outcomes particularly for Māori and Pacific students, and to create a more flexible system able to respond speedily to community input, in the first instance the concept of self-management resulted in the emergence of what she calls "inward-looking schools". Wylie argues that in reflecting the capability and capacity of the community around them, the development of self-managing schools led to a sense of separation between schools and from the central education agencies rather than a collective drive towards system improvement. Even as this phase gave way to one that emphasised capability development through professional learning, Wylie argues that neither the first nor second phase had a discernible impact on reducing inequalities of educational attainment especially for the underachieving populations which the policies were intended to benefit.

Against this backgroup, **Martin Thrupp's** one-year review of school-level policy in 2009 identifies a privatisation agenda as a key driver of the changes. He argues that the neo-liberal focus evident in the year's educational policy was actively contested by local education stakeholders and the media. Seeing research as an important tool in "providing some light among the heat of reform", Thrupp highlights the particular challenges of doing policy research in New Zealand where most research funding emanates from the Ministry of Education. He argues that we may need to look outside of New Zealand for in-depth analysis of the impact of neoliberal policies, including private-public partnership, in order to assess the likely impact of similar policies within New Zealand.

Reminding us that 2009 was the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, **Sarah Te One and Carmen Dalli** apply a children's rights perspective to analyse the impact of shifts in early childhood education policy during 2009. They argue that if we take children's rights seriously, then Government needs to treat the provision of high-quality early childhood education as a right that children have by virtue of their citizenship. Their analysis of the first year of National's early childhood education policy concludes that recent gains in this direction have been undermined by a systematic chipping away at the coherent policy infrastructure of the 10-year Strategic Plan (2002-2012) for early childhood education. The authors argue that a new critical ecology, within the early childhood sector using a children's rights perspective, is important to future evaluations of early childhood policy.

**Frances Langdon, Peter Lind, Cynthia Shaw and Erin Pilcher** look closely into the implementation of a policy that affects the professionalism of teachers working across the early childhood to secondary levels of the education sector. Reporting on the piloting of the beginning teacher induction and mentoring guidelines introduced by the New Zealand Teachers Council in 2009, this paper provides an in-depth examination of the dynamics that create supportive professional contexts for beginning teacher development. Combining onsite leadership with national policy guidelines around mentoring emerges as an educative and transformative approach to learning for both beginning teachers and their mentors.

Shifting our focus back to a more local level, the paper by **Cherie Chu** illustrates that change need not wait for big policy initiatives. In an article in which she reflects on the ongoing national concern with developing leadership potential within Pacific communities, Chu provides an example of how working locally can begin to address more global issues. Using her personal experience of working with appreciative inquiry in mentoring Pacific groups and individuals within a tertiary context, Chu makes a strong argument for the potential of this approach in leadership mentoring.

**Jenny Horsley** addresses a different issue from a local perspective, that of how teachers can promote high ability students' success in the New Zealand Qualifications Authority Scholarship examinations. Her paper draws on students' perceptions of the personal and professional qualities of the influential teachers to whom they attributed their success in scholarship. Reflecting on the links between student outcomes and teacher characteristics, Horsley argues that the alignment of characteristics of effective teaching is closer to those identified by students in her study than to the characteristics of effective teaching of gifted students identified in the literature. She suggests that school leadership has a role in ensuring a carefully planned strategy for promoting the success of scholarship students.

From the perspective of this journal, 2009 was also a time of change. At the end of the year, we took over the editing of the journal from Ian Livingstone whom we wish to publicly acknowledge for the superb job he did as editor for 14 years. In a year of changes to both the production and distribution process of the journal, we have been pleased to "hold the baby", so to speak, as joint editors of this transition issue. In particular, we have made changes to the peer review procedures of the journal turning it into a fully blind process to conform more closely to the demands of our PBRF environment. Another aspect that has changed is that the journal is no longer marketed by New Zealand Council for Educational Research as part of a package of three and, from the next issue it will be moving to a fully online format.

We take this opportunity to thank all our past and present editorial board members as well as our reviewers for their contributions to the journal.

No reira, tena koutou, tena koutou katoa.

Carmen Dalli and Joanna Higgins