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Editorial

New Zealand Annual Review of Education (2021 main issue)

Education policy and practice in challenging times

The education agenda of the current Labour Government is one of the boldest and most far-reaching since the inception of Tomorrow's Schools in the late 1980s. Following a period of relatively limited – albeit often highly contentious (for example, National Standards and Partnership Schools) – policy innovations by the previous National-led governments from 2008-2017, significant policy developments and changes have been signalled and, to some extent, implemented across each part of the education sector from early childhood education (ECE) through to tertiary education since the 6th Labour-led government was elected in late 2017. These policy developments include *He taonga te tamaiti: Every child a taonga. Early learning action plan 2019-2029* (Ministry of Education, 2019) developed and released in 2019; the development and promulgation of the compulsory Aotearoa New Zealand histories curriculum (Ministry of Education, 2022a); the ongoing review and implementation of revisions to the National Certificate of Educational Achievement (NCEA) (Ministry of Education, 2022b); the refresh of the New Zealand Curriculum (NZC) (Ministry of Education, 2022c); and the establishment of Te Pukenga (Ministry of Education, 2022d) that brings together all 16 polytechnics with nine industry training bodies into a national mega-polytechnic. While these major developments and changes in educational policy have been – and continue to be – front and centre of work in the educational space within Aotearoa New Zealand over recent years, they also have occurred within the context of the Covid-19 pandemic. As a result of the pandemic, the entire education system has endured three challenging years responding to the resulting fallout on student and teacher wellbeing, the need for rapid shifts in approaches to teaching and learning (including increased use of online and hybrid pedagogies), and the negative impact on student enrolment and engagement in education across all parts of the sector.

Four of the six articles included within this 28th issue of the *New Zealand Annual Review of Education* address and respond to some of the policy initiatives outlined above. In doing so, these articles critique and contribute to debate on these far-reaching changes and provide advice on the way forward as these policies are rolled out and implemented. Others offer analyses and commentary on possible policy developments, including an international perspective reaching into the Pacific.

Our first two articles are focused on current curriculum issues. Carol Neill, Michael Belgrave, Peter Meihana, Rachael Bell, and Geoff Watson's article starts from the premise that while considerable energy has gone into developing the new Aotearoa New Zealand histories curriculum for years 1 to 10, less attention has been given to students' perspectives of studying the history of our country, including their views about the impact of the compulsory nature of the new curriculum. They report on research undertaken with 150 Year 12 and 13 secondary school students and their history teachers across five schools that surveyed students, followed by in-class discussions of key themes identified from student questionnaire responses and discussions with their history teachers. Their

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research explored the reasons students had chosen to study history and their perceptions on the benefits of learning history together with their views on what Aotearoa New Zealand history should be taught and their opinions on the compulsory nature of the new histories curriculum. Implications arising from their findings will prove useful to teachers tasked with implementing the new curriculum together with those initial teacher education programmes and professional development providers supporting the curriculum rollout.

The second curriculum-focused article by Monica Mercury and Bronwyn Wood supports the call for the compulsory teaching of te reo Māori in Aotearoa New Zealand schools and early childhood services, such as that by the Race Relations Commissioner, Meng Foon (Te Ao Māori News, 2022). Drawing on their narrative research using semi-structured interviews of twelve stakeholders, most with extensive experience of the education sector, their article presents an analysis of key factors and issues central to the successful implementation of compulsory te reo Māori teaching and learning. Four key themes were identified: valuing te reo; the importance of leadership at the school and policy level; developing teacher expertise at both the initial teacher education level and through ongoing professional learning and development (PLD); and ensuring sufficient time and resources for teachers to develop and strengthen their te reo Māori knowledge and confidence. These themes are discussed and a visual model, *Te Whare ō Tātou Reo,* presented for conceptualising what is needed to enable te reo Māori to thrive, now and in the future.

Kabini Sanga and Martyn Reynolds are the authors of the third article in this issue. Their article examines the potential of small research institutes to influence policy in Aotearoa New Zealand on Pacific education. In their review of publications from *He Pārekereke Institute for Research and Development in Māori and Pacific education between 2004–2011*, Sanga and Reynolds trace eight selected texts and their impact, directly and indirectly, on New Zealand's Pacific education policy and argue for the important niche that academic units occupy in policy development. Their analysis highlights the criticality of hearing Pacific voices and the ways in which these texts create opportunities for collaborations across Pacific education communities.

Two articles in this issue address issues located within the ECE context with the first of these focused on ECE leadership practices. Marnell and Thornton's article contributes to the limited New Zealand literature focused on leadership in ECE. Working with kaiako from three teacher-led early childhood services, Marnell and Thornton used a practice perspective to investigate whether, and how, early childhood teachers perceived themselves as engaging in leadership practices as a consequence of their participation in internal evaluation processes within their ECE services. They discuss four key themes emerging from their data – teachers' self-identification with notions of leadership; the importance of a supportive workplace culture; engaging in continuous improvement; and characteristics of effective leadership practices in ECE services. Their findings reveal implications for leaders and teachers within ECE settings, particularly in how leadership is conceptualised and enacted and in the adoption of seven effective leadership practices that were also identified. These findings are also relevant to government officials responsible for the development and implementation of the leadership strategy within *He*

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taonga te tamaiti: Every child a taonga. Early learning action plan 2019-2029 (Ministry of Education, 2019).

Linda Clarke, Tara McLaughlin, Karyn Aspden, Tracy Riley, and Vicki Gifkins' article is the second in this issue with a focus on the ECE context. Their article provides a comprehensive systematic review of research into professional learning and development (PLD) in the ECE sector in Aotearoa New Zealand undertaken between 2000-2019, using the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-analyses (PRISMA) protocols (Page et al., 2021). Their review is clearly positioned to inform the Ministry of Education's Early Learning Action Plan where action 3.6 is to "develop a sustained and planned approach to professional learning and development" (Ministry of Education, 2019, p. 25). The selected literature was analysed using the National Professional Development Center on Inclusion's (NPDCI; 2008) professional development conceptual framework in order to gain clarity on the *what* (PLD approaches), *who* (PLD participants) and *how* (PLD topics) of PLD that have been researched in Aotearoa New Zealand in the first two decades of the 21st Century. Their analysis highlights the need for enhanced funding for PLD research within the Aotearoa New Zealand context, particularly to support a Māori and Pacific research base, given the policy imperative that ECE PLD is embedded within a focus on children's identity, language and culture.

Our final article in this issue by Lisa Maurice-Takerei and Helen Anderson offers a very timely critique and commentary on the role of tertiary educators in the Vocational Education and Training (VET) sector, given the re-structuring of the sector and the establishment of Te Pukenga, resulting in the amalgamation of the polytechnic and Industry Training Organisation sectors into the one mega-provider. Their critique highlights the lack of detailed information about the current VET teaching workforce and its professional learning needs, together with a bold plan for teaching staff development that is required if Te Pukenga is to develop the pedagogical expertise required to achieve the government's goals for transformational VET. For those readers less familiar with the VET landscape and recent policy development in Aotearoa New Zealand, Maurice-Takerei and Anderson's article also provides a particularly useful overview of the VET sector and the significant changes that it is undergoing with the advent of Te Pukenga.

Collectively, the six articles published in this year's review reflect both the complex and contested nature of education policy and practice in Aotearoa New Zealand together with the pace of change that has been experienced across the education sector over recent years.

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

No reira, tena koutou, tena koutou katoa.

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