
Editorial

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This student edition of ACE Papers is the second compilation of selected papers from the Masters module, “Curriculum: Theory, Issues and Practice”. The first, Issue 7, was produced in July 2000. Like the former, teachers’ voices prevail in this issue. Contributors studied and discussed module content in either Auckland or Tai Tokerau, and their enrolment was with Auckland College of Education or the University of Auckland.

“Curriculum: Theory, Issues and Practice” is often one of the earlier modules students complete. It is a generic module, which means students are able, within their assessment tasks in particular, to use the module’s theoretical insights to illuminate aspects of education which particularly interest them. Core theories come from classic theorists such as John Dewey, Elliot Eisner, Lawrence Stenhouse, Michael Young, Joseph Schwab, and William Pinar. A selection of insights from contemporary writers such as Michael Apple, Carrie Paechter, Clive McGee, Konai Helu Thaman, Lisa Delpit, John Codd, Russell Bishop, Ivan Snook and Sue Middleton are also included. The latter theorists offer valuable perspectives for the New Zealand context.

Whether international or local in origin, theories are examined not as truths, but as a particular writer’s truth at a specific historical time. Theory, like curriculum itself, is examined as a social construction.

Theories are systems of explanations which enable us to explain *why* we do *what* we do. They are based upon the capacity of human beings to understand, to critique and then to change the world. Rather than accepting that the world is the way it is without explanation, theory establishes the object or problem to be examined and provides a coherent and rigorous method of examining and explaining the issue, all within the philosophical purpose of making changes to improve the lives of people. This way of thinking, that is, of reflection,

critique and change is one of the main characteristics of modernity (Dixon, Rata & Carpenter, 2001, 11-12)

A major focus of 'in class' sessions is the examination of the significance of theoretical insights, and research generally, to policy documents such as Te Whaariki, the New Zealand Curriculum Framework, and to current issues surrounding curriculum development and implementation.

In the following papers there is evidence of the contemplative process each writer has undertaken. The writers demonstrate that they are critically reflective practitioners. While this critical reflection is at an abstract level (empirical research is not a component of the module) these papers indicate that the writers' forthcoming theses and projects, and research, will be strengthened by their ability to access, critique and apply a broad range of theoretical insights.

Susan Heeps and Michele Whitten both address aspects of their professional lives. They discuss how theory has changed their perspectives on practice, and has transformed the way they teach. Heeps challenges the use of news as text, and writes of the need to teach students to become critical thinkers in relation to media. Whitten's article critiques the way science is typically presented in New Zealand secondary schools, and discusses the difficulties students face if they are members of a minority culture.

Alexis Siteine examines two essential learning areas, Social Studies and Technology, and reflects on which is, or should be, a vehicle for citizenship education. Alison Greaves outlines the history of the Special Education 2000 policy, and then looks at the contemporary context in relation to the needs of special education students.

Both Mark Kilpatrick and Linda Cheeseman focus on mathematics. Kilpatrick's article reflects on the place of questioning in a mathematics lesson. He contends that the curriculum does not place enough emphasis on this facet of learning. Cheeseman explores the extent to which the epistemology and pedagogy of mathematics has diversified to include the knowledge and experiences of women. She questions whether the New Zealand Curriculum Framework is truly gender-inclusive.

Jean Gallia explores Elliot Eisner's model of assessment and makes links to the New Zealand Curriculum Framework. She writes of the difficulties inherent in the construction of assessment tasks, and maintains that Eisner's concepts need addressing if New Zealand's assessment system is to be truly authentic.

Finally Val Savidan shares her concerns about ICT and the school curriculum. According to Savidan, ICT has been inserted rather than integrated into the curriculum framework. She contends that one way of working towards ICT integration is through the provision of greater structure and guidelines in the New Zealand Curriculum Framework.

Reference:

Dixon, H., Rata, E., & Carpenter, V. (2001). Introduction: Teachers and Theory. In V. Carpenter, H. Dixon, E. Rata, & C. Rawlinson (Eds.), *Theory in Practice for Educators* (pp. 9-18). Palmerston North: Dunmore.