

IMPLEMENTING THE REVISED CURRICULUM: ISSUES AND IMPLICATIONS FOR LEADERSHIP AND LEARNING

Part One: Sabbatical Focus.

Sabbatical Focus

The focus of this sabbatical taken during term 2, 2007, was to consider the implications of the revised national curriculum, currently in its draft form (MOE, 2006) for learning and leadership for our school, Hauraki Plains College.

Acknowledgements

I would like to acknowledge our Board of Trustees for approving this leave to focus on the learning direction of our school; also to the Ministry of Education, PPTA and NZSTA for the opportunity to take a welcome break from the demands of Principalship. The time to read, reflect and think through future direction was invaluable. Thank you also to Phillippa Hunter, Jeremy Kedian (University of Waikato) and to Pam Hook (Educational Consultant) who have contributed significantly to our thinking around curriculum. A particular acknowledgement to teachers at Hauraki Plains College who role model and continually strive towards engaging our learners in doing their best work and becoming their best selves.

Methodology

The sabbatical programme included:

- Formal study – a Masters level paper *Curriculum Policy and Development* (Lecturer: Philippa Hunter; University of Waikato). Given that curriculum is a contested arena for differing political and educational values, this paper provided a critical theory and practice background in curriculum policy and implementation. In particular the formal study enabled an opportunity to explore and understand aspects of curriculum decision making with a particular focus on the Curriculum Draft document. It also enabled me to complete a Masters of Educational Leadership at University of Waikato which was my personal goal in taking sabbatical leave.
- Various workshops and Principals meetings focusing on curriculum development and leadership. The discussions with other Principals at these meetings were invaluable in bouncing off ideas, clarifying our own vision and being alerted to likely obstacles when working on significant curriculum change. These workshops included:
 - Coalition of Twenty-First Century Principals (convenor David Hood)
 - Central North Island Secondary Principals Association
 - Coronet Cluster (Coromandel / Thames Valley Secondary Schools)
 - Principals advisory group (convenor Gael Donaghy, School Support Services)
 - Hauraki Plains Principals group (which resulted in a successful Extending High Standards Across Schools proposal to develop a personalised learning model across all Hauraki Plains schools)
 - Curriculum leaders at Hauraki Plains College
 - Workshops include Chic Foote's: *Curriculum Mapping* (Learning Network NZ workshop) and Jeremy Kedian's three day programme: *Learning-Centred Leadership* (University of Waikato Educational Leadership Centre Workshop)

Executive Summary:

1. The revised national curriculum provides innovative direction, designed to support schools in meeting the needs of our 21st century learners. The document has far reaching

implications for school leaders and teachers and calls for a significant paradigm shift in terms of the learnt, taught and assessed curriculum in schools.

2. For teachers, the new curriculum honours and challenges their professional identity as curriculum developers and decision makers (Bolstad, 2005).

3. For school and curriculum leaders, the implications of the new curriculum are significant. Leadership of the curriculum requires a new range of capabilities including the capacity to exercise curriculum leadership as an informed, critical and creative process and the ability to bring a sense of cohesion and direction in a time of turbulent and complex change.

4. At Hauraki Plains College, as a result of the reading, researching and reflecting around the revised curriculum document, our future focus and direction is on providing cross curricular, conceptually based and contextual learning at Junior level.

5. At senior level, our focus is on providing coherent learning and career pathways to meet the diverse needs of our learners. Key to this is providing opportunities for teachers to work together in planning programmes across subject areas. It has also resulted in significant changes to our timetable structure.

Background information:

An understanding of the various drivers of the revised curriculum is an important starting place as leaders consider the learning needs of their own students in relation to curriculum decision making and direction at a local level.

Ideological Drivers

- The ideology of market economics which sees learners as commodities in a global, neo-capitalist market place is clearly evident in the Curriculum Draft document. “It is by developing these competencies that they (young people) are equipped to participate fully in New Zealand society and contribute to the growth of its economy” (MOE, 2006, 8).
- The ideology of social constructivism in preparation for a culturally inclusive diverse nation is also a significant ideological driver. “The values outlined in this curriculum are those that the New Zealand community supports because they enable us to live together and thrive in a diverse, democratic society in the twenty-first century” (MOE, 2006, 10).
- The revised curriculum is powerfully informed by a transnational, global perspective through the DeSeCo Project with its emphasis on the development of key competencies required for a successful life in a well-functioning society (Hipkins, 2006; Rychen & Salagnik, 2003).

Change Drivers

As educators, we are one of the few groups of professionals who require a futures perspective to make sense of our work and to fully discharge our responsibility to individuals and society as we prepare our students for their future lives. The following are critical change forces which impact significantly on our work and on the learning needs of our students and which are clearly driving the proposed NZ curriculum direction in terms of what is important for students to know, to do and to understand.

- a) The internet based paradigm: the movement from a book based to an internet based paradigm has significant implications for the nature of the taught, learnt and assessed curriculum in schools (Treadwell, 2006). Teachers now have the resources and capacity to deliver more challenging, relevant and multi-media learning

experiences for students and must be critically aware of the issues involved in teaching a digital savvy generation.

b) The knowledge society: the information explosion available via the internet is forcing educators to think in new ways about knowledge. This networked borderless world demands the creation and application of new knowledge. In this knowledge society, entrepreneurship and innovation as the keys to a nation's economic development (Gilbert, 2005).

c) Anyone, Anytime, Anywhere learning: a new educational paradigm in which A³ learning - Anyone, Anytime, Anywhere - is both possible and probable in a knowledge society driven by the internet based paradigm. Personalised learning programmes, conceptual scaffolding, inquiry and contextually based learning, rich and authentic tasks, electronic records of learning and multimedia learning experiences are fundamental elements of a 21st century learning paradigm (Treadwell, 2006).

d) Disturbing social and environmental trends: in addition to the 21st century emerging learning paradigm are disturbing social and environmental trends. An increasingly culturally diverse nation, the social dislocation of a significant minority on the edges of society played out in the disturbing statistics of a large underachieving student group and the serious concerns over finite resources of an ecologically fragile planet imply that we must educate for social cohesion, equity, sustainability and justice. These change forces are clearly reflected in the future focused themes of the draft curriculum including *Citizenship, Enterprise, Globalisation, Sustainability* and *Critical Literacies* (MOE, 2006).

Part Two: Connecting the Learning at Junior Level

The following explores in depth our thinking and learning journey as a school towards a more connected, conceptually and contextually based curriculum at junior level. It takes the form of a journal article and was my final assignment required to complete a Masters of Educational Leadership (University of Waikato).

Travelling the Rivers North Of the Future

The Rivers North of the Future

Into the rivers north of the future
I cast out the net, that you
hesitantly burden
with stone-engraved
shadows.

Paul Celan

The 'rivers north of the future' is a fitting metaphor for our work as educators in a time of relentless, complex, turbulent and unpredictable change. The river, in this translation of Paul Celan's poem, speaks of a hoped-for, not yet time and a place that cannot be reached simply by projecting from the present, since it lies even north of the future (Cayley, 2005).

As educators, we are one of the few groups of professionals who require a futures perspective to make sense of our work and to fully discharge our responsibility to individuals and society as we prepare our students for their future lives. In a technologically sophisticated, socially complex, environmentally fragile world however, our navigation maps are not so clear and the waters more difficult to navigate than they once were. At best educators at all levels scan the horizon, then "cast out the net" to create educational purpose and meaningful learning experiences which will equip our young people for a world quite different from our own.

A Curriculum for that Place North of the Future

The New Zealand Curriculum Draft for Consultation (MOE, 2006) is timely in that it reflects a futures perspective to guide Primary and Secondary educators in their work: young learners are to be developed as contributors to the economic, social and environmental well-being of New Zealand. They are to become entrepreneurial and enterprising, critical and creative thinkers and active seekers, users and creators of knowledge throughout their lives (MOE, 2006, 8-10). Strongly influenced by OECD research, the future-focused Key Competencies describe the capabilities required for a successful life in a well-functioning society in the 21st century (Rychen & Salganik, 2003).

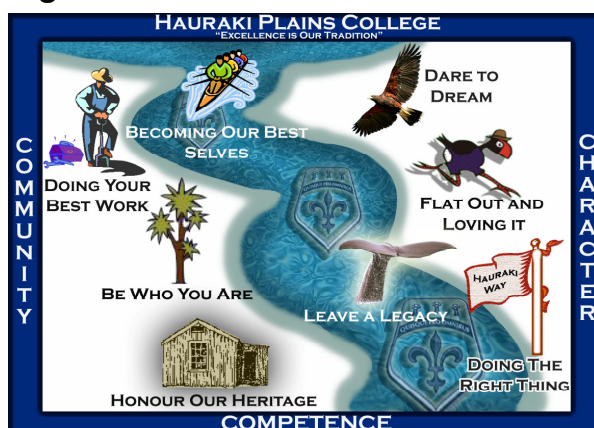
The Curriculum Draft gives schools the direction and flexibility to design and implement its own curriculum in ways that will engage and motivate its particular students” (p. 26). Beneath the apparent clarity of the document, however, lies complex and simultaneously interacting elements which schools need to accommodate when constructing curriculum at a local level. Constructing a holistic, adaptive and relevant curriculum which reflects the stated principles, gives expression to the values of the NZ curriculum, challenges students to develop the key competencies in context and integrates understandings from eight learning areas around significant themes is problematic for schools. With these parameters in mind, curriculum leaders at Hauraki Plains College made the decision to trial an integrated unit of work for Year 9 students in their first term at college.

Casting Out the Net: An Integrated Unit of Work

The theme for the integrated unit was taken from our school charter which is in the form of a river image in which vision, values and mission are represented by the enduring features of the Hauraki landscape.

Ngairé Harris
Hauraki Plains College

Figure 1: The River Charter



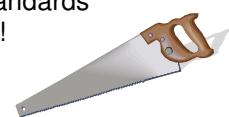
The central metaphor, the river flowing out to the widening sea, represents our core mission: to prepare our students for a purposeful and hopeful future. Various local symbols are used to represent core values within a learning framework of developing character, competence and community. *Honouring our Heritage* was chosen as the theme for the integrated unit of work as it gave scope to introduce new Year 9 students to the traditions, values and expectations of Hauraki Plains College, as well as fostering a sense of belonging and appreciation for the diversity of cultural and natural heritage within our area. Within learning areas, teachers were invited and expected, rather than compelled, to contribute as they thought appropriate, to the cross-curricular theme through their first term’s programme.

A simple ‘Learning Toolbox’ based on our understandings of the key competencies was developed to introduce the concept to both students and teachers (Fig 2).

Figure 2: The Learning Toolbox





Managing Self

- Doing Best work soon as (homework, book work, assignments)
- Doing the right thing, the Hauraki Way
- Following Common Standards
- Do Now – doing it now!
- Having correct gear
- Persisting
- Setting goals



Relating to Others

- Knowing how to resolve conflict
- Using good manners

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Getting along with others - Stopping to think, then act - Following instructions and responding without arguing - No 'put downs' 	
Participating and contributing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Knowing how to work in a team - Being involved in at least one co-curricular activity - Helping each other - Knowing the school song, haka and waiata 	
Thinking <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Using graphic organisers - Reflecting on learning - Revising work - Problem solving 	
Using languages, symbols and text <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Understanding Pukeko words - Writing paragraphs - Drawing graphs - Researching information 	

Alongside this a common unit plan was formatted to support teachers in their planning for an inquiry-based, rich question approach which incorporated the Key Competencies into the learning (Fig 3).

Assessment was left to each learning area but we intended to develop a portfolio approach which allowed opportunities for students to both demonstrate progress and reflect on their learning journey.

Teachers worked within their departments in planning for the unit of work. While the majority of teachers responded either creatively or at least co-operatively, others acknowledged that they found it difficult to incorporate the theme meaningfully into their work. The English and Social Studies departments developed an integrated research and report writing project based on our local and school history. In Mathematics, a measurement context was used to require students to do a sketch drawing of the 'Dog Box' (our original school classroom from 1914 and the charter symbol for *Honouring our Heritage*). In the various forms of Technology, students created an artefact which reflected their personal family or cultural history and in

Science students were involved in making observation drawings and drawing conclusions using the local river as a resource. In Physical Education, students explored the kiwi camping tradition and aspects of our natural heritage during a five day Year 9 camp. In addition, class time was given to a series of assemblies in which students were inducted into the 'Hauraki Way', heard stories from our past and learnt our school song and haka. The unit concluded with a heritage bus trip which featured significant places of historical and natural interest on the Hauraki Plains.

UNIT TOPIC PLAN				
RICH QUESTION: <i>(A provocative, essential, open, charged, connected, practical questions that will be the focus for inquiry)</i>				
Framework				
Concepts and Knowledge:	Skills:	Key Words:	Resources:	Assessment:
Strategies For Encouraging All Students To Do 'Best Work'				
Key Competencies:	Thinking Strategies/Maps:	Modelling:	Feedback and Reflection:	
Strategies For Engaging All Students				
Gifted and Talented:	Challenged Learners:	Maori Students:	ESOL:	

Figure 3: Common Unit Plan

Stone – Engraved Shadows

“The best learning was finding out what we didn’t do and didn’t know,” reflected one staff member as we gathered feedback and considered our next steps:

- Integrated learning approaches vary considerably and take significant time and resourcing to implement successfully. In essence, the *Honouring our Heritage* unit trailed a cross-curricular theme, which is a very loose form of integration. If schools are to create tightly integrated learning experiences around significant future-focused themes, which develop key competencies in a range of learning areas, this will require significant time involving all staff both for collaborative planning and for developing the required resources.
- The Curriculum Draft, which envisions the construction of profound, challenging and connected learning experiences for students, calls for a quantum shift in pedagogy and therefore demands significant ongoing professional development for teachers. Developing teacher confidence both in moving towards an inquiry-based approach and in their identity as curriculum decision makers is a significant issue for schools to consider.
- Allowing teachers flexibility to contribute as they saw appropriate to the Honouring our Heritage theme allayed fears that an integrated approach would undermine the integrity of their learning area and important subject related content and skills would be glossed over.
- The Learning Toolbox provided an introduction to the language of the key competencies to our school community. Our next step is to develop rubrics for each of these competencies for both teacher and student self assessment.

- Socially significant themes offer young secondary school students opportunities to be engaged in work which broadens and deepens their understanding of themselves and their world and is therefore appropriate to the developmental stage of adolescents (Beane, 2007). Such learning experiences need to help our students to answer their great and urgent questions such as: Who am I? Where do I belong? What is my place in the world? In reflecting on the term’s work, one student wrote, “I learnt to care for our past because that is important for the future. I learnt to respect and persist. I came from England but I am proud to be Haurakian.”
- Expressing the vision, principles, values and future-focused themes of the Curriculum Draft through our school charter and in local contexts assists with buy-in from staff, BOT and parents. *Honouring our Heritage* reflects the principle of cultural heritage and is a rich context for working around a number of curriculum values including diversity, respect, community and care for the environment. An integrated unit, based on a further charter value ‘Daring to Dream’ is currently being developed for Year 10 students.

From this learning, curriculum leaders have since refined the *Honouring our Heritage* unit for next year and developed the Daring to Dream Year 10 unit using a conceptually-based curriculum mapping process (Foote, 2007). In this process, a collaborative curriculum map is formed from a number of contributing elements (Fig 4). The curriculum map begins with a ‘Big idea’ and works towards using the conceptual frameworks within each learning area of the curriculum document to encourage teachers to make the shift from a context / content driven focus to a conceptually driven framework of understanding. This curriculum mapping process provides significant opportunities

for our students to experience integrated, inquiry-based, meaningful, challenging and connected learning experiences (Treadwell, 2006).

The conceptual map goes through several reviews by teachers individually, across learning areas, in mixed groups and finally by the whole staff. During this review process, essential skills and key competencies may be integrated and repetitions, gaps and potential areas for departments to work together identified. The intention is that when the *Honouring our Heritage* and other similarly integrated units are delivered, that teaching teams will form professional learning communities focused on the teaching, learning and assessing of students in the particular class associated with that teaching team. Furthermore, funding is being sought from the BOT to employ a part time resource person to support Heads of Departments and individual teachers in developing ideas and gathering the resources required for a inquiry-based approach to their work.

Navigating the Journey: Learning for Leadership

The implementation of future-focused, conceptually based and inquiry-driven curriculum requires a fundamental shift for school leaders from a focus on administrative responsibilities, compliance requirements, finance and property to the stewardship of the curriculum with student learning as the priority. This requires an informed and contemporary understanding of the social, economic and pedagogical drivers of curriculum and the capacity to exercise curriculum leadership in an informed, creative and reflective manner. For the deep and fundamental change that is being asked of schools, school leaders must demonstrate courage in leading strategically, in being willing to move forward without a guarantee of success and in showing relentless energy and enthusiasm possibly through periods of frustration and resentment from some staff

(Marzano, Waters & McNulty, 2006). A distributed leadership model to work through change is essential and appointing an administrative assistant in a school to relieve the Principal of time consuming management tasks may be worth considering.

Leaders need also to acknowledge the very real people concerns around change without giving way to the imperative that schools must change if we are to discharge our duty ethically to this generation of learners. Teachers at Hauraki Plains College were generally receptive to trialling an integrated learning approach because we have recognized for some time that too many of our students lack engagement, motivation, challenge and connectedness in their learning. In the face of a future-focused perspective, our Heads of Departments showed a willingness to put aside their subject related preferences to consider the bigger picture of providing relevant and engaging learning experiences. Teachers were invited, rather than compelled to work around a common theme, allowing them to remain as professional decision makers in preserving the integrity, the 'must knows' of their learning areas. We are also fortunate to have a number of Primary teachers employed at Hauraki Plains College who have provided a critical mass of enthusiasm for an integrated approach.

I return to the imagery of Paul Celan's poem. Like a river, our learning journey continues to meander, flow, snag and follow dead ends as we have endeavoured to make collective sense of what we mean by learning and what sort of learning will provide challenging and relevant experiences for our students in the 21st Century landscape. As we consider the task ahead in terms of implementing the new curriculum, the *Honouring our Heritage* thematic unit demonstrates that schools will need to be capable of considerable resourcefulness

and wisdom as they cast out the net to meet this challenge. It is hoped that in sharing our curriculum story, this may be of use to others who also work in the realm of the rivers north of the future. ■

About the Author

Ngairé Harris has been Principal of Hauraki Plains College from 2002. This article is her final assignment to complete a Masters in Educational Leadership at University of Waikato.

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Mapping Element	Explanation	Example (Year 9, Level 5)
Big Idea	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Broad abstract notion relevant to a range of learning areas May be a significant theme from curriculum document eg Sustainability (p.26) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Honouring our Heritage
Enduring Understandings	The essence of what we want students to know, understand and appreciate by the end of the unit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> An appreciation of local heritage: history, people, place and environment Belonging to our school My place in our community
Rich and challenging focus question	<p>Each learning area chooses a focusing question which</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> contributes to one or more of the enduring understandings facilitates inquiry-based learning provides a focus for the unit of work is based on an important concept from the conceptual framework within each learning area of the curriculum document 	<p>Examples (from Level 5)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Social Sciences: Explore how ideas and actions of people in the past have had a significant impact in shaping our lives and identities Science: Investigate how natural events and human actions can affect our living conditions Health and Physical Education: Investigate and experience ways in which people's physical competence and participation are influenced by social and cultural factors
Context and Content	<p>Each learning area develops a unit of work which</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enables the development of conceptual understandings to answer the rich and challenging tasks or question Provides context and content ie the body of knowledge that needs to be taught and learnt in order for the concept to be understood 	<p>Eg: Health and Physical Education:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Context: Year 9 camp: Content: 'Must knows' in terms of knowledge and skills <ul style="list-style-type: none"> What is the great kiwi outdoor tradition? Appreciating the great outdoors Camp craft Risk management Working together
Integrated competencies, skills and experiences	Cross curricular Key competencies, learning to learn skills and common experiences are integrated into the units of work	<p>Examples</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Learning toolbox Doing Research and report writing Thinking maps Year 9 assemblies for introduction to the <i>Hauraki Way</i>, school traditions, past pupils and guest speakers from local community
Culminating Task	<p>A challenging task which brings together the learning for the term's work in which students</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Demonstrate their enduring understandings of the 'Big Idea' Include a task from each learning area in response to the rich and challenging question 	<p>Students compile a portfolio</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tasks from learning areas A written report based on their enduring understandings A self assessment of Key Competencies A reflection of their term's work and goals for next term Presented at parent / student evening

Figure 4: Curriculum Mapping Process

Part Three: Providing Coherent Learning and Career Pathways at Senior level.

The revised curriculum

The revised curriculum encourages schools to plan for coherent learning pathways. One of the issues we face as a rural school of around 630 students is to provide sufficient breadth in our learning programmes at senior level to meet the needs of the diverse abilities and aspirations of our senior students as they increasingly specialize. We are also mindful that our students need to keep open a range of options for future study and work. "Schools have a crucial role to play in making the transitions positive, ensuring that students have a sense of direction, and helping them to construct learning pathways that they are motivated to travel" (MOE, 2006, 32).

Reconstructing curriculum at senior level

Current issues:

At Hauraki Plains College, we face a number of challenges with our current timetable structure. These include:

- Lack of flexibility: we currently run a twenty five hour timetable. At senior level, this is made up of six lines with four hours per subject with an additional hour for school assembly or study each week. This is meshed with a seven line timetable structure at junior level in which English, Maths, Social Studies and Science each have four hours per week while the Arts, Health and PE and Technology have three hours per week making a total of twenty five hours. When initially introduced around 12 years ago, this timetable structure worked well, but the implementation of the National Certificate in Educational Achievement and increasing demands for a wider range of subjects at senior level has meant that this timetable structure is no longer serving our purposes and severely limits staff and subject flexibility.
- Student choice is our most important consideration in constructing the timetable each year. This has, however, lead to significant imbalances in class sizes both within levels and between levels. Some NCEA level 3 classes may have as few as ten students while at level 1, a small number of classes have as many as thirty students. Even with classes of the same subject and same level, there are significant imbalances in class size.
- Insufficient level three courses are also an issue. We simply do not have the staffing to offer the range of courses for students who do not intend to pursue a university education. While Gateway has expanded learning opportunities for these students, we still find that when it comes to subject selection time, too many of these Year 13 students struggle to find courses appropriate to their needs within our current subject offering.

Timetabling for learning pathways:

The intention of the revised curriculum is that schools provide coherent learning and career pathways. Kedian (2006, 21) makes the point that form (ie school structures, design and staffing) must follow function, that is the core business of schools, learning and teaching. With this in mind, we

have begun reconstructing our curriculum and timetable with a clear focus on broad learning pathways. Four major pathways have been identified - Skilled Trades, Services, Academic Humanities / Business and Academic Science / Mathematics. While this is very much a work in progress at the time of writing this report, the following is being put in place to ensure a pathways structure for 2008:

- An eight line timetable structure at both junior and senior level with each line allocated three hours per week. The 25th hour is set aside for either school or levels assemblies.
- In each timetable line at senior level, one or more courses is offered relevant to each of the four identified pathways. Reducing allocated time from four to three hours per subject per week frees up sufficient staffing to enable a greater range of courses to be offered.
- The number of credits being offered in each senior course has been reduced to approximately 15 (with the exception of level 3 academic subjects).
- In Level 3 Academic subjects, because of the university requirement of a minimum of 14 credits in at least two subjects, an extra hour has been allocated outside the 8 line structure. Teachers / students will decide whether this will be during the current lunch hour or after the close of the current school day. In any event, this teaching hour will be counted as part of their teaching load.
- The eight lines will enable the inclusion of languages and learning literacies at junior level.
- Blocking of classes within each learning area at Years 9 and 10 is to be extended to include Year 11 classes in English, Maths, Science and Physical Education for a more equitable distribution of class sizes.

Perceived benefits:

We are well aware that there are a number of fish hooks in this proposal, including extra workload issues in redesigning courses and the increased impact of interruptions for a class that is on only three hours per week. Curriculum leaders have agreed however that staying with the status quo is no longer an option and are keen to trial an eight line by three hour timetable structure in 2008 because of the perceived benefits in terms of meeting the learning needs of our students. These benefits include:

- Coherence in providing clear pathways for students. The selection of a learning and career pathway is underpinned by an extensive career guidance, individual mentoring and academic monitoring programme.
- Flexibility in terms of student choices. Students are not restricted to one particular broad pathway of learning. For those students who are undecided on their career pathways or who may want to take an interest subject outside their chosen pathway, this is encouraged and can be accommodated within their learning programmes.
- Equity in terms of meeting the needs of a diverse range of students, particularly for those who are not pursuing a university education.
- Collaborative relationships which have resulted as teachers across various learning areas have met to design courses for a particular pathway. English, Mathematics and Economics teachers are working

together with the Technology department to provide learning programmes which will meet the needs of students in the Skilled Trades pathway for example. Childcare, Hospitality and PE teachers are working together on a Health and Related Studies course suitable for students on the Services pathway. In essence, constructing curriculum around pathways is breaking down the subject silo mentality and enabling courses to be designed which combine units of work from several learning areas.

Part Four: Implications of the Revised Curriculum for Leadership

Aside from the introduction of the National Certificate in Educational Achievement, the last time New Zealand went through a nationwide curriculum change was in 1993 with the introduction of the New Zealand Curriculum Framework. The introduction of the revised curriculum is therefore posing significant leadership issues for school leaders.

The complexities inherent in the revised curriculum

The general framework of the revised curriculum encourages responsiveness to local needs. “Each school will design and implement its own curriculum in ways that will engage and motivate its particular students” (p.26). This acknowledges the professional autonomy of Principals, curriculum leaders and teachers as curriculum developers and decision makers.

Just how much flexibility schools will have is up for debate for while school based curriculum development is encouraged, at the same time the framework provides for considerable direction and future regulation. “Values *should* be evident;” “students *need* to be challenged to develop their competencies” and “principles *should* guide each school” (MOE, 2006, 9 – 11). The reality for secondary schools is that from year 11 at least, the curriculum is dictated by the New Zealand Qualifications Authority. At the writing of this report, it is unclear which elements will be mandatory and which will be for guidance only within the revised curriculum document.

Layered beneath Curriculum Draft’s apparently simple statements are complex issues (Aitken, 2006). There are multiple elements including the vision, principles, values, key competencies, learning areas, effective pedagogy and future focused themes. It is unclear how these will relate or what their relative importance will be. How can they be integrated to form a holistic, adaptive, relevant curriculum? Where do the key competencies fit? How do schools design a framework in such a way that “the vision, values and principles are embedded in the key competencies, the learning areas and the daily life of the school” as the draft curriculum suggests (MOE, 2006, 28)? Where does the personalised learning agenda fit (MOE, 2007)? How do we find space between the ideological drivers of economic instrumentalism and an enlarged social agenda while also striving to preserve the integrity of each learning area?

Providing Leadership and Direction in School based curriculum development

The introduction of the revised curriculum demands a significant shift in focus for school leaders from management and compliance concerns around school finances, planning and reporting, personnel, property, health and safety and legal considerations to the stewardship and leadership of the curriculum. In order to successfully implement this innovative national curriculum, school leaders require an up to date understanding of the nature of the taught, experienced and assessed curriculum and a well informed and future focused educational position of how the school will look from a curriculum perspective. This is a challenge for all principals, but particularly so for those whose focus has been on management concerns or who have been out of the classroom for some time. New metaphors and mental models are needed to replace the production line and content driven thinking of former years. At the same time, we need to retain what is valued and valuable in learning and teaching and continue to commit to what is wise, profound and timeless while we seek to give strategic direction in our schools.

The work of the leader is to bring cohesion, coherence and sense of grounded reality to the vision. This requires a new range of capabilities and in particular the ability to exercise curriculum leadership as an informed, critical and creative process. Deep reflection on experience, the integration of new knowledge, the capacity to see new ways of doing things, to re-imagine school and to manage significant change successfully have become even more important in the wake of the huge paradigm shift demanded by the revised curriculum (Beare, 2001; Caldwell, 2006). The ability to align all aspects of school life to meeting the learning needs of students and to continually communicate our work to all levels of a school community is a massive undertaking akin to building a plane while we are trying to fly it! (Bywaters, 2002). School leaders cannot do this alone and now, more than ever, a distributed and collaborative leadership model is required.

Conclusion:

If the curriculum is the cultural heritage that will enable the next generation to live, work and recreate a safe, sustainable and productive community, then we need to ensure that as school leaders, we provide informed, grounded and strategic leadership. The Sabbatical leave enabled me to do the reading, researching, reflecting, relating, rehearsing, 'riting and risking which are integral to learning for leadership and particularly required in a time of significant change (Stoll, Fink & Earl, 2003). Our work at Hauraki Plains College is very much a work in progress as we now seek to align learning programmes, professional learning initiatives, learning resources and facilities, ICT provision and school structures around providing coherence and connectedness in meeting the learning needs of all of our students.

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