

Curriculum, Progress and Achievement Ministerial Advisory Group Background Paper

Design a process for evolving national curriculum in Māori and English



Kōrero Mātauranga
Me kōrero tātou

**Have your say about
the future of education.**

Purpose of the Ideas¹

The gazetted national curriculum, comprising *Te Marautanga o Aotearoa* and *The New Zealand Curriculum*, sets the direction for teaching and learning for all New Zealand schools and school programmes. It has been in place for more than a decade. While New Zealanders, and especially New Zealand educators, feel a justifiable pride in the forward-thinking and holistic nature of our national curriculum, if we are to create a system that learns, we need to create a process through which the curriculum can be responsive to new learning and to changing needs, opportunities, and priorities.

A process for an evolving national curriculum is important because:

What is seen as valuable to learn is influenced by a range of political, economic, social and cultural influences and ideas such as the place of indigenous knowledge and culture, different views on what should be considered the basics, and the place of digital technology. Society faces greater environmental, economic and social challenges today than were apparent when the last curriculum review began in 2000. Internationally there has been a shift in emphasis to include wider aspects of wellbeing, including the health of the planet (OECD, 2018a).

Te Marautanga o Aotearoa and *The New Zealand Curriculum* were designed to reflect the needs of New Zealand learners and New Zealand society, as these needs were understood in the first decade of this century. They rest on organisational structures, processes and assumptions about how to organise teaching and learning from that time period. In New Zealand we now seek a greater curriculum emphasis on: wellbeing of self; community and environment; place of Te Tiriti o Waitangi, te reo and te ao Māori; and, seeing diversity as a strength and inclusion as a right (Ministry of Education, 2018).

A regular review process would ensure clarity about what is most important for students and provide a process for identifying to what extent the knowledge, skills, attitudes and values currently emphasised in the national curriculum need strengthening or changing to align with shifting circumstances.

The OECD Future of Education and Skills 2030 project (2018a) argues that curriculum review and design is about answering the following two questions: 1) What knowledge, skills, attitudes and values will today's students need to thrive and shape their world?; 2) How can instructional systems develop these knowledge, skills, attitudes and values effectively? An evolving process would lead to renewed clarity around what is most important for students at the time of publishing a national curriculum and in an ongoing way. Any review would prioritise effective practices and content that support the development of the knowledge, capabilities, competencies, attitudes and values that today's students need to thrive and shape their world.

Some other countries are also developing the notion of an evolving curriculum in response to the rapid and profound changes in society (Department of Education, 2011). For example, Australia's curriculum is available online in an interactive format, allowing access to the iterations as they occur. They have just completed the first iteration of Foundation to Year 10 (ACARA, 2016, 2018).

OECD (2018b) identified one of the issues of traditional national curriculum design and implementation as the time lag between what a national curriculum intends, and when it becomes a reality for all students. One of the reasons for this could be that the way national curriculum has been designed can hinder local curriculum design (Sinnema, 2016). For example, the task to design local curriculum can be particularly difficult if the expectation of what to draw from leads to cognitive overload. Aitken (2005) showed that teachers of Social Studies were left with an impossible task to integrate a huge number of national curriculum elements – aim, strands, achievement objectives (some content and others process) and associated indicators, perspectives, settings and aspects in the 1997 New Zealand Social Studies Curriculum.

Our challenge is to design and implement a systematic long-term programme of evaluation and inquiry to determine if, and how, new evidence should be used to inform both the evolution of *Te Marautanga o Aotearoa*

¹ According to MAG's Emerging Ideas: Conversation Document

and *The New Zealand Curriculum*, and their implementation, so that the vision for students becomes a reality for all students. The design would need to be easy to use for local curriculum.

We need to design a process for evolving national curriculum because the current state is as follows:

There is no timeline or process for national curriculum review, yet we expect *Te Marautanga o Aotearoa* and *The New Zealand Curriculum* to provide a clear documented national direction for learning while at the same time remaining dynamic and relevant. At the moment there is only an expectation that kura and schools have processes in place for an ongoing local curriculum review (Education Review Office, 2016a, 2016b), as curriculum design and review is seen as a continuous, cyclical process (Ministry of Education, 2007).

Historically, the national curriculum has been reviewed in response to emerging issues and political directions. The 1993 curriculum was reviewed in 2000-02 in response to the kura kaupapa movement, the increasingly diverse population, more sophisticated technologies needing to be developed and an increased complexity of work demands (Ministry of Education, 2007). *The New Zealand Curriculum* was published in 2007, followed by the *Te Marautanga o Aotearoa* in 2008. Since then there have been ad hoc changes in priorities, with the addition of Digital Technologies and Hangarau Matihiko curriculum content in 2017. Changed priorities are currently described in the revised National Administration Guidelines (Ministry of Education, 2017). Over time a greater emphasis has been placed on physical exercise and careers education.

People now talk about an 'over-crowded' curriculum, as the changes have been to elements of the curriculum, rather than thinking of the curriculum as a whole. Clarity and coherence may have got lost over the years. A review process for an evolving national curriculum would help develop a sense of cohesion, prioritise effective practices and content, and also decrease the 'overcrowded' nature of the curriculum.

Although our national curriculum does not currently have a regulated review cycle, the NCEA and Achievement Standards are both required to be reviewed every five years. Both are being reviewed in 2018. Any reviews of the national curriculum should be aligned with these so that one review can inform the other, and vice versa.

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