

THE CURRICULUM STOCKTAKE REPORT: A PHILOSOPHICAL CRITIQUE

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In the decade 1990-2000, the New Zealand curriculum underwent major revision.

Out went the old syllabus documents which had been developed over the previous thirty years; in their place appeared the New Zealand Curriculum Framework [NZCF] (Ministry of Education, 1993) and a raft of curriculum statements covering the seven essential learning areas (mathematics 1992, science 1993, English 1994, technology 1995, social studies 1997, health and physical education 1999, the arts 2000).

In 1997, an undertaking was given that upon publication of the full set of curriculum statements there would be a time for consolidation and reflection.

To achieve this, a curriculum stocktake was established, the report of which was presented to the Minister of Education in September 2002.

Following on from this, a Curriculum Project has been put in place to redevelop the New Zealand Curriculum as a result of the recommendations of the report. The timeline for the project is: consultation during 2003-4, publication of drafts in 2005, and the revised framework curriculum to be published in 2006. (Presumably any revision of the curriculum statements will come later). Given the central importance of the stocktake report to the curriculum project, it is essential that the report be subjected to rigorous and critical scrutiny if it is to serve as the foundation for future curriculum revision and development. The report needs to be examined from a variety of points of view: here, I offer a philosophical critique of basic assumptions and ideas and leave it to others more competent than I to provide empirical analysis.

A PHILOSOPHICAL LACUNA

Prior to the stocktake, we were informed that the stocktake would, amongst other things, investigate a number of problems/issues associated with the curriculum, including "philosophical/epistemological issues" (Ministry of Education, 2001, p. 2). Post-report, we have been told that the stocktake investigated these issues (Ministry of Education, 2003, p. 2). This is simply not the case, for the good intention is not matched by a similar outcome. In short, the philosophical and epistemological issues have *not* been investigated.

CRITICAL AND PHILOSOPHICAL LITERATURE

From reading the report, including footnotes and bibliography/references, it is all too obvious that the stocktake report has failed to include any of the critical literature, especially that of a philosophical nature, which has been levelled at the Curriculum Framework and the Curriculum Statements. There is no acknowledgement of the substantial body of literature contained in the three issues of *Delta* (48(1), 48(2)/49(1)) which, written by many of New Zealand's leading educational commentators, presented a devastating attack on so many aspects of the curriculum. The authors of the stocktake report were presumably aware of this work, given that it has been publicly available since 1996. Why it was ignored is not altogether clear.

I am inclined to draw a more sinister conclusion from the omission of critical and philosophical literature: that the authors of the report, and the Ministry of Education which presented it to the Minister of Education, in a climate of political correctness, countenanced no criticism of the curriculum except for that which it could control. And what were the sources of information upon which the report is based? Section One: Background identifies the following sources: National Education Monitoring Project reports, National School Sampling Study, invited comment from the Australia Council for Education Research and the National Foundation for Educational Research (UK), the Curriculum Stocktake Reference Group consisting of representatives of major stakeholders in education, meetings of various groups (essential learning areas, principals, business) and submissions. All of these could be controlled by the Ministry of Education in a way that independent academic critique can not.

Failure to engage with the critical, and particularly the philosophical, literature meant that the stocktake addressed neither the broader social philosophies within which the NZCF and the curriculum statements and proposed revision could be examined nor the more specific epistemological challenges raised against the old which the new would need to deal with. A golden opportunity to utilise the talents of philosophers of education to tackle some of these issues was lost; the sources of information identified above appear to contain no one with professional philosophical expertise nor is it evident that anyone with such ability ever came close to contributing in a way which would have avoided the philosophical problems contained in the stocktake report.

Perhaps this lapse in philosophical insight can be redeemed by those instrumental in revising the curriculum: the original *Delta* articles, updated and added to by new contributions, have been published by Dunmore Press in a two volume edition edited by O'Neill, Clark, and Openshaw (2004a, b). It would certainly behave those charged with the responsibility of generating a revised curriculum to confront head-on the many challenges raised by the critics.

ASSESSING THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION POLICY: SUBJECTIVE OR OBJECTIVE?

The stocktake report begins with a statement from the New Zealand Curriculum Framework (Ministry of Education, 1993):

The New Zealand Curriculum seeks to raise the achievement levels of all students and to ensure that the quality of teaching and learning in New Zealand schools is of the highest international standard (p. 3).

The report then notes, "the quality of the curriculum...is measured by its contribution to this goal" (Ministry of Education, 2002, S2, p. 1)¹. It is clear from the general tenor of the report that the Curriculum Framework, together with the curriculum statements, constitutes education policy; collectively, they prescribe in some detail the direction the curriculum is to take in its translation from national documents to classroom learning and teaching, and the sorts of things to be learned and the outcomes to be produced if the above-stated goal is to be achieved. Given that the curriculum documents are deemed to be part of a broader package of education policy, and the curriculum stocktake is an example of the analysis of education policy, then the stocktake report offers a startlingly naïve view of what it was to do: "Assessing the quality of education policy is problematic because of the subjective nature of what constitutes quality; any definition of quality is related to the specific goals of a group" (ibid., p.1). There are two parts of this claim which are of philosophical concern: one is the presumption in favour of subjectivity over objectivity, the other is the presumption in favour of relativism over universality. Subjectivity and relativism may appeal to those in the Ministry of Education but because of their inherent philosophical limitations they tend to have very little appeal for philosophers. We shall consider each one in turn, albeit briefly.

It is far from clear that assessing the quality of education policy is subjective; certainly it is far more than just being subjective alone. It is subjective only insofar as any assessment of quality is something that humans, individually, engage in; I make an assessment, you likewise, so do countless others, and in making our own judgements we are, in this very minimal sense, being subjective. But this does not logically entail that assessment of the quality of education policy must remain at the level of subjectivity. We can and do appeal to criteria about which we can argue, agree or disagree with, and apply to old, existing and new policy. Is the policy internally coherent? How does it cohere, if at all, with established policy? How efficient and effective is it as a means of achieving goals? What is the empirical evidence for and against it as policy? And so on. Indeed, if the stocktake report itself is anything to go by, its assessment of the quality of this particular piece of education policy, namely the curriculum, rises above the subjective to encompass a wide range of rather objective criteria.

The second concern is the rampant relativism deemed to be an essential feature in assessing the quality of education policy. Relativism arises when ideas are related to groups, so that what might be right for one group may be wrong for another, and there are no independent criteria, outside of all groups, to determine which group's view is the right, true or best view. This is exactly what the stocktake report advances in its claim that "any definition of quality is related to the specific goals of a group." Theoretically, relativism is self-refuting. What of the claim itself: "Any definition of quality is group related"? Either it too is group related or else it is generalisable across groups. If the former, why should other groups accept it? If the latter, then it is not group related, so false. In practice, none of us in our daily lives are relativistic – if we were, we would be doomed to paralysis! Groups, even opposing groups, are quite capable of reaching agreement on matters, some if not all of them. Quality and its assessment can be universalised across groups, and this is certainly alluded to in the stocktake report, and reiterated above, when, after quoting the Curriculum Framework goal, the report observed "the quality of the curriculum...is measured by its contribution to this goal". How is it possible to even measure quality in the absence of a definition of quality? And yet, based on its sources of information, the stocktake report arrives at a non-relativist view about the way quality is to be measured and does so by exploring both the conceptual and empirical evidence available to measure how well the curriculum contributes to the goal, and is able to make some clear recommendations as to how a revised curriculum could contribute to the goal.

It is quite amazing that the rhetoric of subjectivity and relativism is so earnestly promoted; fortunately the report itself is, by and large, devoid of it, being characterised by objectivity and universality. It is just a pity that such a glaring

contradiction should be so obvious in a Ministry report to the Minister.

STARTING POINT

One of the more disturbing features of the stocktake report (and there are many such features) is the statement that:

This report takes stock of the last decade's curriculum developments and their implications for teaching and learning, and considers the implications for future curriculum policy development. It does not, however, undertake a review of the curriculum from first principles (ibid., S1, p. 3).

One needs to ask, how it is possible to "take stock of the last decade's curriculum developments and their implications for teaching and learning", including "philosophical/epistemological issues", if no heed is paid to reviewing the curriculum from first principles. The first principles of the curriculum are, in part if not in full, philosophical/epistemological in nature about the nature of knowledge and what knowledge is of most worth, so it is just bizarre to hold that the former (first principles) were ignored while the latter (philosophy/epistemology) were not. Failure to consider first principles seems to be a very good reason why the philosophical/epistemological issues were not examined. More puzzling still, why, in a curriculum stocktake the recommendations of which are to form the basis of future curriculum revision, was no effort made to explore first principles? Too hard, too boring, not relevant, insufficient time, lack of enthusiasm? What? It is surprising that first principles, the bedrock foundation of the curriculum, would be eschewed in favour of a more superficial analysis as delivered. No wonder the stocktake report recommends more of the same with minor revision here and there. How could it be otherwise given the abject failure to reflect on first principles.

THE CURRICULUM

The stocktake report begins with a discussion of the curriculum, the nature of which is, initially, quite strange. For a start, consider the stated definition of the curriculum: "The curriculum encompasses *all* learning, both formal and informal, occurring in educational settings, including social values, attitudes and norms of behaviour as well as a body of knowledge" (ibid., S1, p. 1 emphasis added). *All* learning in educational settings is encompassed by the curriculum? Surely not. Consider, for example, two girls talking in class about the weekend, where one girl learns what the other did. Or a child overhearing one teacher's conversation with another and

so learns something about a teacher's private life. In what possible sense could this learning, albeit informal, be part of the curriculum?² The definition is just too broad and fails to discriminate between that learning which we would most likely regard as being of the curriculum and that which we would not. The limitations of this definition become all too clear when the report moves on to analyse the curriculum in greater depth.

National curriculum are developed as 'intended' curricula, changed through regulation to 'planned' curricula, become 'taught' as they are interpreted, reformulated and internalised by teachers. Finally, curricula are 'experienced', 'learned' and 'internalised' by students. (ibid., S1, p.1).

Much learning goes on in and around schools which fits neither the intended, planned, taught nor experienced curricula. These curricula, from the national level to the individual, have built into them selections of the worthwhile and specify, in their various ways, the learning to be promoted. They certainly do not encompass all learning, and most definitely are likely to exclude certain learnings such as learning swear words, learning about sex through experience "behind the bike shed", learning what various drugs are like and so on. Why anyone in the Ministry of Education would tell the Minister of Education that 'the curriculum encompasses all learning' is beyond comprehension.

CURRICULUM PURPOSES

The stocktake report claims that "the official purposes of the current New Zealand curriculum...are not explicit in current curriculum policy" (ibid., S3, p. 1). Wrong! The Curriculum Framework makes quite explicit what the purposes of the curriculum are, even if we do not necessarily agree with them. The purposes fall into two categories: individual good and economic good:

The New Zealand Curriculum recognises that all students should have the opportunity to undertake study in essential areas of learning and to develop essential skills. Such learning will enable them to develop their potential, to continue learning throughout life, and to participate effectively and productively in New Zealand's democratic society and in a competitive world economy (Ministry of Education, 1993, p. 3).

The stocktake report argues that the purposes of the New Zealand curriculum

should be to (1) clarify expectations for all New Zealand students, and (2) develop the human capability necessary for prosperous and inclusive New Zealand society. Both are problematic.

In enhancing the first purpose, to clarify the expectations for all New Zealand students, the report observes that the outcomes of the national curriculum need to reflect higher level thinking and be goals for learning rather than benchmarks or minimum standards. Quite so. But difficulties arise with the reduction of learning to learning outcomes and talk of achievement objectives, achievement data, performance indicators, benchmarks and the like (Ministry of Education, 2002, S3, p. 2). This is no more than the discourse of technical rationality, where learning is reduced to specified bits to be assessed in one way or another (Lee, Hill, & Lee, 2004). Earlier last century the same argument was advanced and was convincingly demolished by Dewey (1916) Macdonald-Ross (1975), and others. Is there no one in the Ministry with any understanding of curriculum history? Are we doomed to repeat past errors through current ignorance?

Surely, if the curriculum is to have a purpose, then learning too must have a purpose. What is learning for? Learning, to have an educational rationale, must be for educational ends, for the development of educated persons, individuals who are free to make judgements and decisions, and autonomous in their choices, consistent with the maximum freedom and autonomy of all to make rational choices within such realms as moral conduct, aesthetic appreciation, emotional responses, cognitive understanding, and the like. Built into this is a love of learning for its own sake in the quest for the Socratic exemplar that the unexamined life is not worth living. Sadly, this noble ideal is lost in the debased world of specified outcomes endorsed by the report.

The second purpose is as flawed as the first. To develop the human capability necessary for a prosperous and inclusive New Zealand society is, on the surface, commendable; who, after all, wants to live in an impoverished society? But read on:

Continuous technological, social and economic change will mean continuous change in the level and types of capability needed, the range of opportunities and career paths available and the relative wages offered for different sets of skills and capabilities. In the face of this change, the national curriculum has a role in safeguarding and promoting social cohesion (ibid., S3, p. 2).

That the curriculum has an economic purpose is undeniable. But what is so disturbing about the quotation is the taken for granted idea that change is just to be accepted, not challenged; more reprehensible still is the claim that the curriculum has "a role in safeguarding and promoting social cohesion": In short, "accept your lot", do not challenge the direction of change, better to be cohesive as a society even if we are heading in the wrong direction than to generate social conflict underpinned by debate and disagreement over our social/economic/political arrangements. Globalisation is good, dissent is bad! One can but only ask, in whose interests are such ideas being promoted? Certainly not in the interests of educated citizens in a democratic society who seek to engage in fruitful debate about their society. We need not be held captive to the dictates of a global economy; rather, as educated citizens we are entitled to draw upon our full intellectual resources to question, analyse, criticise, yes even reject, the very changes in our society which this stocktake report so naively just takes as a given.

OUTCOMES

The report states that a national curriculum "facilitates consistency of opportunity of outcome" (ibid., S1, p. 1) and then notes that with the Curriculum Framework "curriculum policy shifted from a focus on content...to curriculum policy based on outcomes...by demonstrating what students achieved during schooling" (ibid., S1, p. 2). Later, we are told that "the outcomes-focus of the national curriculum has strengthened the quality of assessment, and offered direction for reporting what students can do" (ibid., S2, p. 22). As testimony to this, we are presented with a mass of empirical data from a raft of assessment and research studies (NEMP, PISA, TIMSS) which purport to provide evidence of student achievement (ibid., S2, pp. 3-7).

If this is what learning is reduced to, learning outcomes achieved during schooling which can be measured and compared internationally, then there is something dreadfully wrong with such an approach (Elley, 2004). Student achievement outcomes are not to be dismissed but they are not of intrinsic value; rather, they are no more than empirical indicators of something far more significant. Rational

thought, logical reasoning, moral autonomy, emotional maturity, aesthetic appreciation, social responsibility, democratic citizenship, and the like rise above the outcomes and give outcomes their rationale. These are the proper ends of education, learning and the curriculum, for they thread through the whole of a person's life in a way that the limited outcomes displayed during schooling do not. After the completion of schooling do we really care five, ten, twenty years on about these school achievements? No. But we do care about the higher virtues to the end of life. So, why does the stocktake report take such a myopic view of learning? Possibly because it is geared to international comparisons and these can only be achieved if learning is reduced to easily measured empirical indicators which the life-long virtues cannot. Such a focus may hearten political masters but will do little to enhance the more important, but less tangible, facets of human existence.

CURRICULUM STRUCTURE

The Executive Summary of the stocktake report states that "the modified versions of the frameworks should be similar in structure to the existing frameworks" (ibid., ES, pp. 2-3). In short, with some minor revision, retain the structural status quo of the New Zealand Curriculum Framework document. The wisdom of this advice is very suspect in relation to the essential learning areas, attitudes and values and skills³.

ESSENTIAL LEARNING AREAS:

The report contains a near-fatal tension between two very contrasting approaches to curriculum structure, both of which are advanced favourably. The existing essential learning areas are retained, which represents a "pillars of knowledge" model of curriculum structure.⁴ No epistemological justification is advanced for continuation of this framework. However, the report notes that "submissions also indicated that the essential learning areas...and their translation into curriculum statements...fosters artificial compartmentalisation of knowledge" (ibid., S2, p. 17), and then remarks, "arbitrary compartmentalisation of knowledge may prevent students from transferring knowledge" (ibid., S2, p. 17). Curriculum integration is offered as a solution to this fundamental philosophical problem about the structure of knowledge, but it is far from clear that integration, however conceptualised, could really solve the epistemic conundrum.

Oppositionally, the report also promotes a view which stands in contrast with the "subject silo" model of the curriculum:

In the sections of the Framework on the essential learning areas...these should be guidance statements that explain that the essential learning areas do not have to be taught as distinct subjects. This section should make explicit:...

- The learning should be holistic (ibid., S2, p. 18).

This notion of holistic learning can be linked to epistemic holism, that knowledge is not logically divisible as the Curriculum Framework (and the report) would have it, but is rather a unified whole. Like a spider's web, observation sentences lie at the edge, logic and mathematics radiate across the whole, with a concentric shift from observation sentences to the most general statements of science, morality, aesthetics, etc. at the core. Such an epistemic theory supports the type of curriculum developed by the Queensland New Basics project which the report acknowledges contributes to the cultivation of the attributes of a life long learner as:

- a knowledgeable person with deep understanding;
- a complex thinker;
- a creative person;
- an active investigator
- an effective communicator;
- a participant in an independent world; and
- a reflective and self-directed learner (ibid., S2, p. 11).

The stocktake report's position on the innovative and holistic New Basics curriculum is extremely disappointing for its sheer educational conservativeness and political timidity. While the report does suggest one reason for adopting such an approach is "the movement from the industrial age to the knowledge age, where the old order is no longer regarded as sufficient or appropriate" (ibid., S3, p. 6), which is very much in line with the push for schools to direct themselves to the advancement of a knowledge society, contrary reasons seem to prevail:

the approach may be too far out of step, or ahead of, schools, parents/whanau and society. Adopting an approach similar to New Basics would represent a radical departure from New Zealand's current curriculum, and as the New Basics programme has not yet been evaluated, it poses considerable risks. (ibid., S3, p. 7)

Because it is significantly different from the Curriculum Framework model, New Basics "may not provide sufficient guidance for teachers" (ibid., S2, p. 12). There is something quite curious about this negative argument: New Basics is declared unworthy because it may be out of step with schools, parents and society, as well as reducing teacher guidance, but not one word is said about the educational benefit it could bring to children who, as learners, are the ones most likely to benefit from it.

VALUES:

On values, there are two noteworthy points and a word of caution to be made. The report observes that the stocktake did not provide an assurance that the values contained in the Curriculum Framework are the most appropriate in the current social, economic, and educational climate (ibid., S2, p. 14). Given the shift in political ideology, from the libertarianism of the 1980s-90s to the more communitarian stance of the new millennium, then it comes as no surprise to be told that the revised curriculum needs to include particular values linked to (1) curriculum purposes - equity, respect for diversity, democracy, excellence, global human responsibility, active community participation and contribution, citizenship; (2) essential skills - truth/logic, self-respect/acceptance, honesty, responsibility, justice, fairness, co-operation, tolerance, concern for others, open-mindedness, ingenuity; and (3) higher level thinking in essential learning areas --- aesthetics, beauty, environmental guardianship, truth and logic. Given the contrary emphasis on markets, competition, choice and individualism found in the Curriculum Framework, replacement of the old values by new ones is to be applauded.

The Curriculum Framework also advanced a values clarification approach to values education, a position now recognised in the report to be extremely defective. It is encouraging to read of a more enlightened outlook:

Current international thinking favours an eclectic approach to values education. In the USA, former proponents of values clarification now tend to support a combination of moral guidance

and values clarification. In the UK, modelling and imitation, training and habituation, and enquiry and clarification are the three main processes of values education (ibid., S2, p. 15).

Philosophers of education have, for a long time, criticised values clarification and argued for what is now being proposed. Attention to this is certainly welcome, but the puzzle is why was no attention paid to it earlier?

Now to a word of caution. The reports advocates that "teams of cross-disciplinary specialists and different members of the community should work together to determine the nature of the values in the revised frameworks" (ibid., S2, p. 15). New Zealand is a pluralistic society, where a range of competing values jostle for prominence. In the realm of morality, there are no moral experts to pronounce on right or wrong, good or bad, so any suggestion that "cross-disciplinary experts and different members of the community" are going to be able to determine which values to include is likely to be strongly contested - moreso when we move from very general values to their being cashed out into specific rules and practices.

SKILLS:

There is some confusion in the report about skills which needs to be sorted out. In one place, the report recommends that the current 57 essential skills in eight groupings be reduced to "five essential skills" (and then lists six!): creative and innovative thinking, participation and contribution in communities, relating to others, reflecting on learning, developing self-knowledge, and making meaning from information (ibid., E5, p. 3). Elsewhere, the report makes reference to "five groupings of skills" (ibid., S2, p. 15) and in chart form identifies the skills needed for each of the five essential skills (ibid., S2, pp. 12-13), and then to compound the confusion states "many of the existing essential skills...can be incorporated within these groupings" (ibid., S2, p. 13). Question: are there five, six or many more essential skills? If the five or six general labels are skills, then in what possible sense of skills are they skills at all? What, exactly, are learners to be skilled in? Skills are usually quite specific performances, like the many specified in the chart, but then there are many more essential skills than five or six.

This conceptual confusion over skills reflects a deeper philosophical muddle over what skills are. If "skills" is to be retained as a curriculum category containing a range of skills classified in various ways, then we need to be very clear about the notion of skills and the criteria used to include some

skills but not others. Barrow (1990), in his analysis of skills, defines them thus: "A skill is an ability, usually physical, that is discrete and improved by training or practice" (p. 88). On this account, a skill must meet the following conditions:

- (i) it is usually a physical performance of some sort which tends to rule out 'thinking' skills;
- (ii) it is usually something that can be directly observed rather than inferred through observation;
- (iii) on the basis of an observation a decision can be reached above the level of achievement a person has reached in acquiring a skill;
- (iv) a skill can be clearly demarcated from other skills; and
- (v) skills improve with practice and decline with neglect.

Now, those skills classed as "physical skills" certainly do seem to mean the criteria for being a skill. On the other hand, there are a number of things called skills which do not appear to meet the criteria at all. For example, the **Curriculum Framework** identifies "argue a case clearly, logically and convincingly" as a skill, but it does not fall within the scope of skills as here defined. It cannot be reduced to either a skill or a set of skills; rather, to argue clearly, logically and convincingly is an extremely complex human activity requiring a sound grasp of theoretical concepts; an understanding of the meaning of words and sentences and their logical relations; an awareness of what counts as a good reason or as compelling evidence; an appreciation of the importance of the laws of logic, and so on. All of this is about as far removed from skills as one could get. Even if we could agree on what skills are, and what things count as skills, some further justification is surely required for including some skills but not others. Why, for example, might the skills of catching a ball be mandated for all but not typing skills? To what extent might certain skills be included because they meet the specific needs of certain employers rather than catering for the more general needs of an educated public? These are questions which must be addressed, but are not.

The report recommends combining skills and attitudes, holding that teachers should consider the use of skills alongside the attitudes of motivation (inclination) and discernment (intention). If we are going to go down this route, then we should go the whole way; skills are also knowledge-constitutive and value-laden, so in the end there needs to be a coherent position developed on how all four - knowledge, values, attitudes, and skills - are woven into a whole. Hence, the earlier call for holism.

CONCLUSION

No statement is immune from revision, and neither is any document. The stocktake report is thus open at least to philosophical scrutiny. Some claims in the report lend themselves to rejection because of their philosophical difficulties which could have been avoided if someone with philosophical awareness had been involved in either writing or reviewing the report before its delivery to the Minister of Education. Other claims are the stuff of which philosophical debate is made, and so will be the subject of extensive philosophical critique, as arguments of clarification and justification are traded to and fro without final resolution.

It is clearly evident that the Ministry of Education is doing very little beyond tinkering with bits and pieces rather than subjecting the Curriculum Framework to a rigorous and critical evaluation derived from an analysis of first principles. Too much is simply taken for granted rather than being subjected to systematic scrutiny. Too little is supported by rational justification. Elsewhere, I (Clark, 2004a) have examined the philosophy of rigorous eclecticism which the Ministry has created to give some philosophical respectability to the Curriculum Framework. Given the serious epistemological chaos this philosophy contains, it really is not altogether surprising that the Curriculum Framework, upon which it is based, itself reflects a similar level of muddled thinking. It is surely time that a consistent, coherent and cogent approach to curriculum policy is developed.

The Ministry of Education has a well-deserved reputation for not engaging in rational debate with its critics. This is all the more the pity for, as such eminent philosophers as John Stuart Mill (1962) and Karl Popper (1972) have pointed out, it is only with the clash of ideas that truth will emerge. The Ministry of Education has no mortgage on the truth. The refusal to confront philosophical challenges is an intellectual disgrace. Insofar as proposals such as those contained in the stocktake report are taken as the starting point for a new curriculum scheduled

for 2006, then the Ministry has a moral duty to engage in systematic and rigorous deliberation with its philosophical critics if the educational interests of our children are to be best served. This paper is a contribution to a long overdue robust philosophical debate.

NOTES

¹ References to the Curriculum stocktake report contain, between the date and the page, S1 or S2 or S3. These refer to the sections of the report which were printed off the Ministry of Education web site in separate sections and the pages were numbered 1-n for each section.

² One of the reviewers objected to this, remarking that such learning would be involved in the hidden curriculum. Possibly, but possibly not. Regardless, such learning is not part of the formal curriculum contained in official curriculum documents such as the Curriculum Framework and the associated curriculum statements. One should not confuse the formal curriculum with the hidden curriculum. The stocktake report and this critique are only concerned with the learning officially legitimated.

³ For a more detailed philosophical critique of these four elements of the Curriculum Framework see Clark (2004, b).

⁴ The essential learning areas are to be retained, albeit with some revisions here and there. It is possible that one or two of them could be given new or extended titles along with some alterations to headings or major sections. If this does happen, it may be attributed, at least in part, to the influence of the New Basics.

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