

## Uptake on the Curriculum Stocktake Part 3

The Ministry of Education's curriculum stocktake has involved, among other things, its commissioning of three independent reports (available from the Ministry). The report written by Joanna Le Metais of the National Foundation for Educational Research (England), and titled **New Zealand Stocktake: an international critique**, concluded with a single recommendation: "Consideration should be given to the declaration of a moratorium on curriculum change, to enable schools to incorporate all seven Statements into their school curriculum in partnership with education agencies and the wider community."

The "international" part of this review seems to be confined to the writer journeying from one international airport to another to do an analysis of New Zealand's curriculum statements. Certainly there is little here to indicate evaluative scrutiny of the kind that is referenced against potentially broad and rich international perspectives. It hardly represents thinking outside the square and into a dynamic view of the world of the learner. Basically it is saying keep the model you invented 10 years ago despite that model having been subjected to wide-ranging criticism.

The second report, written by Sue Ferguson of the Australian Council of Educational Research, is titled **Curriculum Stocktake: Report on the New Zealand National Curriculum, 2002**. This report compares "outcomes" prescribed in New Zealand's curriculum statements with those prescribed in South Australia's, Victoria's and England's (hardly international). So what! Where is the virtue in alignment or collaboration over what has been devised by other government agencies who each subscribe to a similar way of thinking about curriculum structure?

The third report, produced by a team of researchers at the University of Waikato, is titled **Curriculum Stocktake: National School Sampling Survey**. This set of investigations covers teachers' responses to the curriculum generally, and to mathematics and technology in particular.

The detailed and comprehensive analyses show that for substantial numbers of teachers, all is not swimmingly tickety-boo! To suggest otherwise would be misleading. This data rich third report is the meat sandwiched between two not particularly nutritious slices of uninviting white bread (that is, the first two of the three reports).

Then, of course, we got the Donnelly (another Australian) review of our curriculum, commissioned by the Education Forum, who are to be applauded for taking a non-governmental initiative. A masterly critique of this review has been written by Gwen Gawith (the Good Teacher).

Suffice to quote Gwen on the topic: "... the curriculum stocktake is, irrespective of its findings, intent on treading water rather than revising the curriculum."

I suspect this could be right - and the reports written by Le Metais and Ferguson could well help batten down the hatches. So to use Gwen's words again, are we destined to continue to ride an "overweight, flabby outcomes-driven dinosaur"? Hardly sounds like it's capable of bolting even if the doors were left wide open!