Editor's introduction

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This edition of *Curriculum Perspectives* continues some of the discussion raised in previous editions about the opportunities and challenges presented by new and distinctive constructions of school curricula and the degree to which such curricula reforms deliver on their promises.

Lindelani Mnguni's paper, 'Citizenship education and the curriculum ideologies of Natural Sciences and Life Sciences curricula in South Africa', raises some important concerns about the prevalence of particular ideologies and the degree to which they can undermine attempts at curriculum reform. Mnguni contends that despite previous efforts to address the inequalities and injustices of the apartheid regime by emphasising citizenship education, findings reveal that a citizenship-centred ideology has not been achieved in the Natural Sciences and Life Sciences curricula investigated in South Africa.

Taking a related approach, Amy Morris and Cathie Burgess' paper is based on their analysis of the intellectual quality and inclusivity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander content in the 2003 and 2012 New South Wales Stage 5 History syllabuses. The authors argue that although the Australian Curriculum's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Cross Curriculum Priority (CCP) was introduced into the NSW 2012 Stage 5 History syllabus with the aim of improving student engagement with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures, this has not been achieved. They argue that the paucity of intellectual rigour and in-depth understandings about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories, cultures and peoples in the syllabus documents will not redress those misinformed understandings of Indigenous cultures that permeate the Australian schooling

and fail to meet the intended requirements of the Australian Curriculum.

Little is known about curricula, schooling and the types of programs and instructional strategies used in youth detention centres both nationally and internationally. In their paper, Bronwyn Ewing and Grace Sarra draw from the first eighteen months of a three-year study aimed at addressing the significant gap in the research related to incarcerated Indigenous young people, schooling, disabilities and the mathematics curriculum. Indigenous and low Socioeconomic status (SES) youth involved in detention in the juvenile justice system in Australia have historically underachieved in mathematics. The authors' study involving one hundred and twenty incarcerated young people, and a mathematics teaching team of ten teachers who participated, aimed at investigating how to close the gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous students' understanding of mathematics. Their paper makes a significant contribution to understanding the learning needs of these disadvantaged and marginalised youth and how their needs might be met.

Readers of this journal are well aware that over the last decade in Australia, a major structural shift from state-based control to a national approach to curricula has resulted in the development of an 'Australian Curriculum', and that this has been accompanied by considerable debate about the strengths and weaknesses of the new national curriculum document. Notable in these debates is the concern that there has been scant consideration of the theoretical principles underpinning this attempt at curriculum reform. By way of contributing to curriculum scholarship, the Australian Curriculum Studies Association (ACSA) has proudly released a new publication, edited by Alan Reid and Deborah Price, which explores some of the debates and tensions around the architecture of the new national curriculum in Australia as well as the challenges to its successful implementation. *The Australian Curriculum: Promises, problems and possibilities*, examines a range of questions about the first national curriculum with reference to how concerns about it played out, and how the outcomes of these debates are represented in the curriculum text.

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In the journal's Australian Curriculum section, one of Australia's leading curriculum scholars, Professor Lyn Yates, provides a comprehensive invited review essay of *The Australian Curriculum: promises, problems and possibilities*. Yates discusses the book's attempt to include more than twenty varying perspectives on the Australian Curriculum, with chapters ranging from its context and its political implications to the Learning areas, General capabilities, Cross-curriculum priorities and issues of assessment, as well as chapters assessing the curriculum's adequacy in terms of various kinds of diversity and inclusiveness. At one level, Yates discusses value and the difficulty of bringing together these different kinds of perspectives and reflects on what they represent as an insight into the current forms of Australian curriculum inquiry. At another level, she raises questions about the broader purposes of education in a democracy; and of the complexity of interactions between national frameworks such as the Australian Curriculum; political purposes; and educational practices within schools, amongst others.

By way as a 'taster' for the book (Reid and Price 2018), Nicole Mockler's chapter, based on her keynote address delivered at the ACSA National Symposium in Sydney in October 2016, is included in this edition of *Curriculum Perspectives*. Mockler takes up Grumet and Yates' challenge to understand curriculum as "a projection towards a future as well as a drawing from the past" (2011, p. 245) by exploring some of the contemporary enabling and constraining factors for curriculum integration in Australian schools. Mockler's work serves as a timely provocation in the continuing discussion about what matters in the education of young people. She asks - how can teachers 'work the tension' between those enabling and constraining factors she identifies to be more than functional 'curriculum deliverers'? In doing so, Mockler makes a case for an active engagement between teachers and students rather than a content-based plan or testing agendas as the way towards realising an authentic curriculum in Australian schools.

The set of papers in the Point and Counterpoint section, Guest Edited by Tonia Gray, provide an overview of what curriculum change-makers are doing to foster young people's curriculum entitlement to learn outdoors and the creative ways in which outdoor pedagogy can be realised. Indeed, these papers provide rich insights into why Outdoor Learning -

'learning for, with, and about the natural environment' - must be included in the curriculum. Gray refers to international research that supports the benefits of student-centred outdoor learning and nature immersion for health, wellbeing, creativity, brain function and development. In her introduction to these papers, Gray notes with specific reference to the Australian context, that it was only after lobbying from peak industry bodies and outdoor professionals that the independent statutory authority responsible for the development of a national curriculum, the Australian Curriculum and Assessment Authority (ACARA), finally recognized the importance of Outdoor Learning in 2017.

In the Book Review section, Sofia Mavropoulou, discusses the features and emphases of a publication aimed at assisting parents and early years educators to prepare and support young children with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) in their schooling. Autism, a condition that affects an individual's ability to interact with the world around them, has wide-ranging levels of severity and varying characteristics. Mavropoulou considers the book's merits in providing those parents and early childhood educators seeking to obtain knowledge of specific behavioral strategies, with guidelines to foster school readiness that, in turn, will contribute to successful school experiences for children with ASD.

Finally, a flyer for *The Australian Curriculum: promises, problems and possibilities* is included in this edition - please share it with your curriculum colleagues. The book will be launched at the International Association for the Advancement of Curriculum Studies (IAACS), co-hosted with ACSA and the Australian Association for Research in Education at the Melbourne Graduate School of Education, University of Melbourne, in December 2018.

References

- Grumet, M., & Yates, L. (2011). The world in today's curriculum. In M. Grumet & L. Yates (Eds.), *Curriculum in today's world: Configuring knowledge, identities, work and politics* (pp. 239–247). Abingdon: Routledge.
- Reid, A., & Price, D. (Eds.). (2018). *The Australian Curriculum: Promises, Problems and Possibilities*. Canberra: Australian Curriculum Studies Association.

The Australian Curriculum: Promises, problems and possibilities

Edited by Alan Reid and Deborah Price

Over the last decade, Australia has been in the process of implementing a national curriculum.

The move from state-based control to a national approach marks a dramatic shift in the Australian education system, and so raises a number of significant questions: Why and how did this happen? What were the debates, disputes and processes that led to the current version of what is called the Australian Curriculum? To what extent does it meet the future needs of Australian society? Is it a national curriculum, or do the states and territories still really retain control? What might happen from here? What should happen from here?

Within the book's 284 pages, many of Australia's leading curriculum scholars explore such questions about Australia's first national curriculum. The book will assist in understanding and analysing the debates and tensions around aspects of the architecture of the Australian Curriculum, how these played out, and how the outcomes of these debates are represented in the curriculum text.

The book has been structured into six parts and is designed to be read as a whole, or in parts, or as individual chapters. It will be of interest to a wide range of academics, pre-service teachers, school-based educators, policy makers and anyone interested in Australia's national curriculum.

To order your copy of *The Australian Curriculum: Promises, problems and possibilities*, contact ACSA on 02 6260 5660 or order online www.acsa.edu.au

The Australian Curriculum: Promises, problems and possibilities

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The Australian Curriculum: Promises, problems and possibilities is available for \$105.00 each (GST inclusive) for ACSA members and \$125.00 each (GST inclusive) for non-members. Postage and handling is \$23.30 (GST inclusive) within Australia. For multiple copy orders, please contact ACSA on 02 6260 5660, or e-mail accounts@acsa.edu.au